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No. 1168
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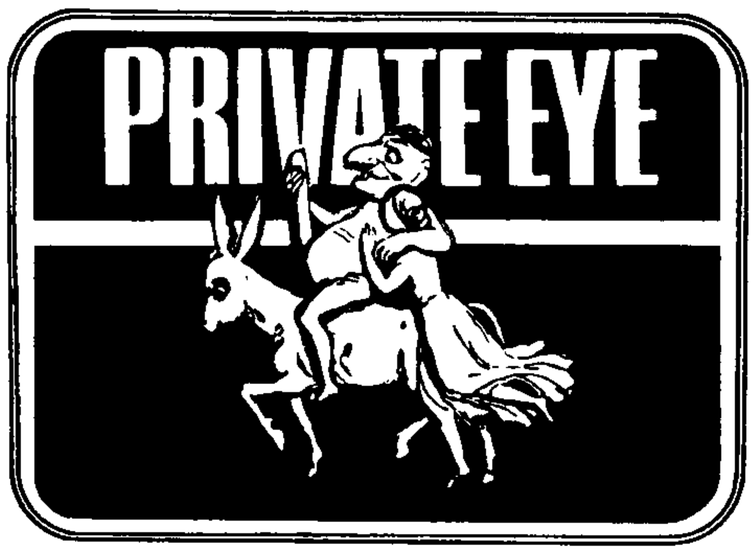
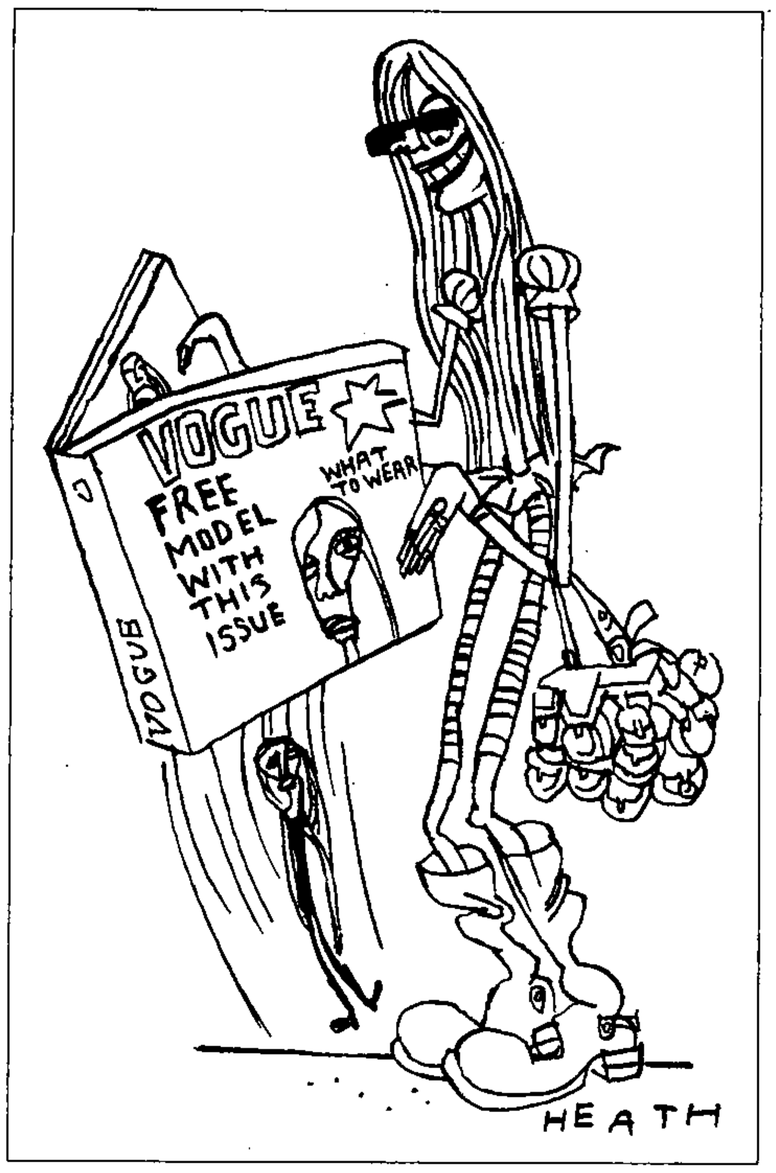


AFTER being harangued by Islamic radical Abu Izzadeen last week, John Reid received a letter from George Galloway expressing alarm that a well-known extremist "was allowed within punching distance of the British home secretary. How? Why?"

Galloway knows a thing or two about punching distance. In his autobiography he describes an angry encounter in the early 1990s, following a Commons debate on Iraq, in which he accused John Reid of being an apologist for the mass-murder of children. When Reid lunged at him, as Galloway proudly records: "I managed to deliver two straight lefts to his florid face."

In last week's letter Galloway noted that he too had been a victim of Abu Izzadeen. "This is the same man who led a group of fanatic thugs in the brief 'hostage-taking' of myself and my daughter and several innocent members of the public during a general election meeting last year."

According to Galloway's account at the time, however, it was even more dramatic than that. He was addressing locals in Bethnal Green when a 30-strong gang burst in. "I was locked in a room with bearded fundamentalists who threatened to string up a rope and hang me for apostasy." Luckily his son-in-law was able to summon Inspector Knacker. "The police saved my life,"

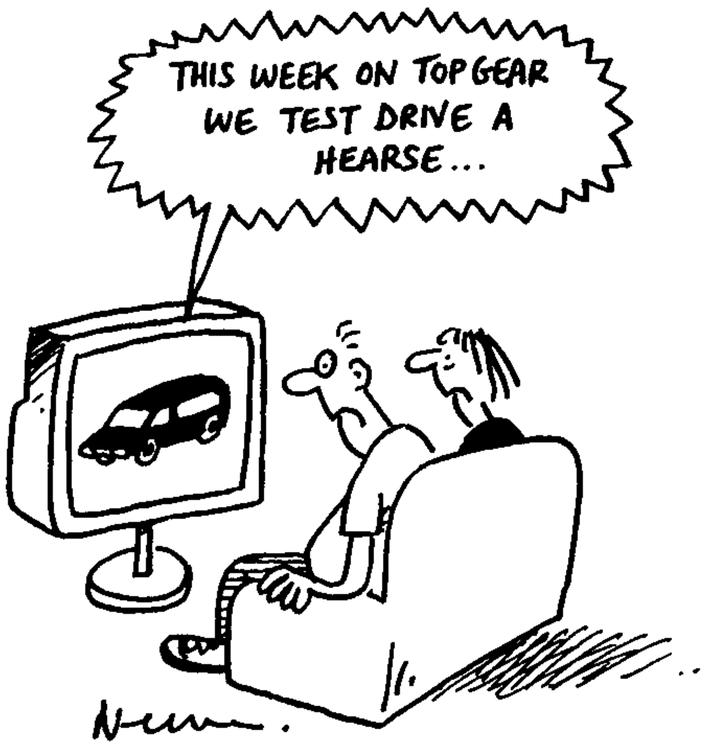


Galloway told the *Evening Standard*.

Eighteen months on, as he urges Reid that Izzadeen should be "rigorously prosecuted" for any offence he has committed, the home secretary may wonder why the bearded loon was never charged with his attempted lynching of Galloway.

No doubt Tower Hamlets police would be happy to explain. After the incident, they tried for months to get the MP to provide a statement, but he seemed unwilling or unable to do so. However, they did acquire a videotape of the event.

It showed a group of jihadists arriving at the meeting and jeering at Galloway – but no evidence of "hostage-taking" or death threats. Although there was eventually a brief fight between two rival Islamist groups, this occurred *after* George had been escorted away by Knacker. Perhaps the camera had run out of tape at the crucial moment when his life hung in the balance?



EDITORIAL
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Subscription enquiries: 0870 750 1714 or 01795 414 871
Overseas: +44 (0) 1795 414 870 Fax: 01795 414 555.
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Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by BGP Ltd, Bicester OX6 7QZ. **Distributed** by P.E. Distributions, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. 020 7437 4017.

ABC

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"You can only push people to a certain level until they explode."

– islamic radical Abu Izzadeen on the *Today* programme, 22 September.

TONY Blair and Margaret Beckett were quick to express their "concern at developments in Thailand" last week. But what did they have to say about the startling upheavals in Hungary, a country rather closer to home? Not one word.

The reason for this strange silence is pure embarrassment. Last week's riots were prompted by the admission from Hungarian PM Ferenc Gyurcsany, at a supposedly secret session of the socialist party, that: "We lied throughout the past one-and-a-half or two years. We lied in the morning, we lied in the evening and we lied at night."

Cringe-making stuff. And who has been Gyurcsany's greatest international chum and cheerleader during the years of mendacity? Step forward Tony Blair, who even paid a flying visit to Budapest on a private plane on 17 February this year to endorse him at a socialist election rally – a remarkable breach of the diplomatic protocol that foreign heads of government don't interfere in other countries' elections. Fortunately for Blair his four-hour stopover, and his gushing tribute to Gyurcsany, went unnoticed over here.

Gyurcsany has returned the compliment many times, often depicting himself as "Hungary's Tony Blair". He is one of the last politicians in the western world who still believes in the Third Way – indeed he personally financed the Hungarian translation of Anthony Giddens's book on the subject, which used to be the Blairites' sacred text.

Downing Street's squirming embarrassment at the latest turn of events is also felt down the road in Tufton Street at the international secretariat of Policy Network, a Blairite think-tank set up in 2000 which hosts regular wonk-fests on "modernisation" and "progressive governance". The founder and honorary chairman of Policy Network is Peter Mandelson, who has often visited Budapest in recent years for chats with a close friend who is (even now) PN's official representative in Hungary – none other than Ferenc Gyurcsany.

The Chancellor told a Labour conference fringe meeting that he had been warned of the hatred of the West being taught in Islamic religious schools in Nigeria by Bono, U2's lead singer.

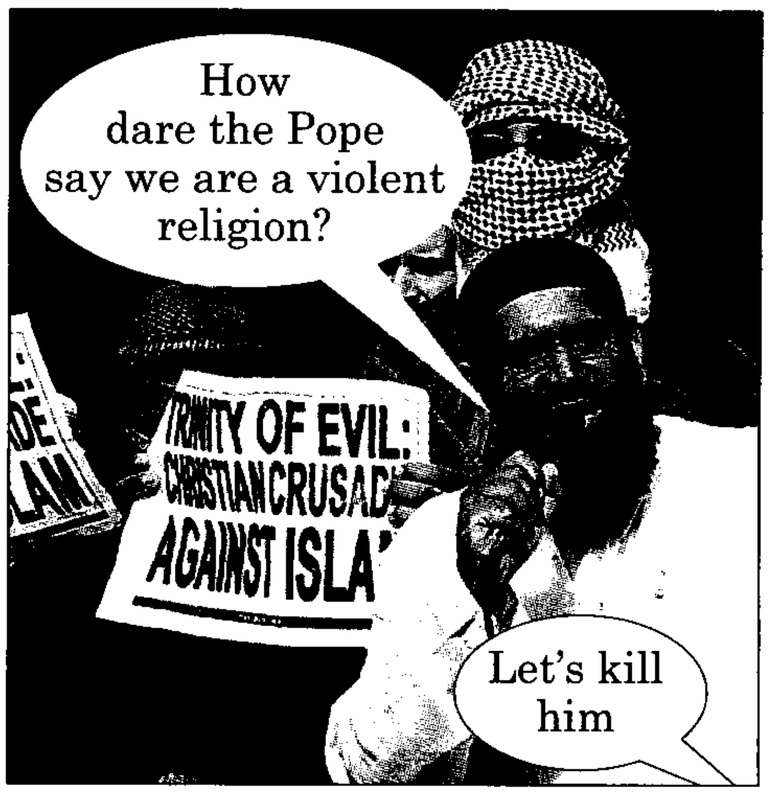
Daily Telegraph

ANXIOUS to appear on top of the biggest fraud ever to hit the exchequer – so-called VAT carousel fraud – the Treasury hasn't been shy to boast about several successful prosecutions and last week it even told the *Guardian* that the scam had been "holed below the waterline".

As the BBC revealed last week, however, the fraud probably cost more than £8bn last year – not the £1.9bn official figures show – and some very serious questions remain over how the government has dealt with a scandal that has cost the public tens of billions of dollars over the last decade.

Carousel fraud is notoriously intractable and can only be seriously fought through labour-intensive investigation. Yet the Treasury only acted this summer – seven years after first knowing the multi-billion pound scale of the problem – to boost the numbers of investigators from 500 to 1,000, with the additional staff themselves taken away from preventing other forms of tax dodging. At the same time, as *Eye* 1165 revealed, more than 2,000 tax investigation jobs were being cut as part of counter-productive "efficiency savings".

The idea of cutting tax investigation jobs while tax dodging is going through the roof emerged from the chancellor's desire to look tough on Whitehall waste before the last election. Funnily enough a certain opposition front-bencher in 1991 lambasted the then Tory government: "The Conservative party accuses us of planning more public expenditure on tax inspectors, as if that were a damning thing. But it is our belief... that a little extra investment may reap substantial rewards. Certainly we think that it would be more fruitful to explore that area than to spend the money hounding poor people on social security." The no-nonsense pre-New Labour spokesman? Gordon Brown!



NEWS

CONNECTING for Health (CfH), the government agency running the NHS's national programme for IT (NPfIT), has gone into PR overdrive to quash several damaging revelations.

First came its denial that loans to the programme's main software supplier iSoft were not bail-outs but advance payments for services at good rates. The only problem with that explanation is that tens of millions remain outstanding from a company that could go belly-up any time and whose future performance is far from guaranteed.

Then came revelations in *Computer Weekly* that systems provided by the programme had suffered 110 "major incident failures" in the past four months, including: the shut-down of a data storage system taking systems out of action in 80 hospitals (see *Eye 1165*); electronic X-ray image systems going down during operations; and failures in a child health system in London, supplied by BT, that has led to a fall in vaccination rates of 19 percent. Yet CfH insisted it was ahead of its availability targets and that "the expression 'major incident' can be misinterpreted".

Last week Connecting for Health's director of external affairs, James Herbert, wrote to the *Guardian* objecting to, among other things, the mention of a critical report into the software system known as Lorenzo that iSoft has been developing. The product, he claimed, would be "available through 2008, in line with CfH's expectations". Except that under the original plans revealed to he *Eye* several phases of it should have been available from March *2004*. So only four years late.

Some earlier spin might also soon come back to haunt CfH. Before this summer's Public Accounts Committee hearing on the project Richard Bacon MP was assured by the companies responsible – BT, Fujitsu, CSC, and Accenture – that a further 22 acute hospitals would "go live" with NPfIT systems by the end of October. So far only a couple have and the *Eye* understands no more than half a dozen or so will do. Even they will have only basic administration systems and not the clinical ones they should have.

So the vision for access to patient records from anywhere in the country remains a distant hope (and as there is little call for it, an unnecessary one). Not that that stopped Richard Granger, director-general of NHS IT, trying to conceal the fact. Asked at the PAC hearing by chairman Edward Leigh: "Is my GP able to send my records to a hospital from London up to an accident I have in Middlesbrough or somewhere? Is that happening now?", Granger replied: "Yes" before going on to say how the new email system achieved just that. In other words, it can be done with bog-standard technology anyway. In which case, why the £12.4bn monolithic NPfIT? Another one for Bacon and colleagues when they next return to the scene of the crime...

Street Of Shame

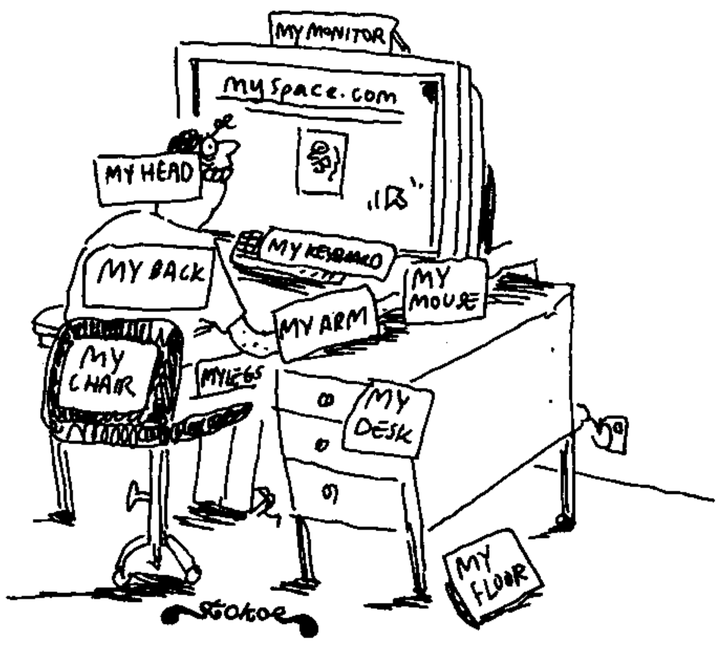
IN THE blood-soaked corridors of the *Telegraph* office the latest victim of mad axeman Murdoch McLennan is comment editor Stephen Robinson, as foretold in the last *Eye*. The amiable *Telegraph* veteran received his marching orders as soon as he returned from compassionate leave following a bereavement.

Trying to explain why his departure would be best for all concerned, the chief boxwallah suggested to Robinson that "you're not happy here". Not at all, the hack riposted, he was actually very cheerful – well, as cheerful as one can be after suffering a death in the family and learning of one's imminent unemployment from the *Eye*.

Groping for another reason, McLennan then accused him of "harassing staff". Again, Robinson would have none of it. He had merely accosted various colleagues to ask why everyone else seemed to know more about his future than him.

One man very much in the know was foreign editor Con Coughlin. A few days before the axe fell, he needed a quiet corner in which to discuss Robinson's impending sacking on his mobile phone. He left his desk and lurked just outside the literary department – where deputy books editor Lorna Bradbury overheard every word. Coughlin could hardly have chosen a better place for his furtive plotting: Lorna Bradbury's husband is Stephen Robinson.

No successor has yet been appointed, as the man lined up to replace him – *Spectator* deputy editor Stuart Reid – refused to participate in the coup. So for the time being the comment pages are being edited by Robinson's secretary.



SO delighted was the *Daily Telegraph* with think-tank Reform's investigation of the lifestyles of under-35s that it devoted a large chunk of its front page and an even larger chunk of its website on 18 September to the woes of "The iPod Generation."

The piece was illustrated online with a large picture of a young man plugged in not to an iPod – but to a Sony Walkman cassette player which was at least a decade old.

Number crunchings

60 ■ Number of journalists being sacked at Telegraph to pay for paper's "digital revolution"

600 ■ Number of readers who have bothered to download the Telegraph's new digital edition

PICKING up his editor of the year gong at this year's GQ awards on 6 September, *Daily Mirror* editor Richard Wallace put his success down to "a combination of hard work and the odd piece of luck".

The following morning he demonstrated both in his paper's coverage of Steve Irwin's death, with references to his friendship with "Prime Minister Ron Howard". The Australian premier is John Howard. Director Ron Howard played Richie Cunningham on *Happy Days*...

IT WAS quite a coup for the *Mail on Sunday* to secure an exclusive interview with Diane Thatcher, estranged wife of Maggie's buffoonish boy.

Quite brave, too. For one of her revelations was that Mark began an affair with one Sarah-Jane Clemence back in 1989. "He said he really did love me and he was sorry he'd hurt me," Diana recalled. "He agreed to cut off all contact with Sarah."

The *MoS* noted parenthetically that Sarah later married Lord Francis Russell, son of the 13th Duke of Bedford, though "they no longer live together". What it forgot to add was that they no longer live together because Sarah has now shacked up with Mark, in a villa on the Costa del Crime.

The few stories that have appeared about their *amour* have all parroted the line that they only fell in love last summer. Sarah's aggrieved husband, who is suing her for divorce on the grounds of adultery, will no doubt be even more furious when he learns that they began their canoodling 17 years ago.

All most embarrassing for Sarah – and possibly for *MoS* hacks, since her sister happens to be the current Lady Rothermere, wife of the paper's owner.

THE *Daily Mail*'s diary column was deeply offended by Gordon Brown's interview with Sky TV, taking issue with the prime-minister-in-waiting's "anxious courtship of Sky boss Rupert Murdoch. Is he like Blair now in danger of being seen as a creature of the media tycoon?"

Well, the chancellor can certainly Brown-nose powerful media figures when he needs to. In 2003 he recorded a special video message for a Media Society reception in which he heaped praise on "someone of great journalistic skill, an editor of great distinction and someone of very great personal warmth... he has devised, developed and delivered one of the great newspaper success stories of any generation."

Then, of course, he was talking about Paul Dacre, editor of the *Daily Mail*. Is Dacre upset about his favourite pet going off to sniff other people's bottoms?

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Yes, I'd forgive my husband if he had an affair – by Mrs Chris Tarrant... 'He could have a string of women but I'm sure he hasn't. I feel very secure. I've never had reason to suspect or doubt him.'" – ***Daily Mail*, 3 April 2004.**

"In fact, say friends, for the past couple of years Chris and Ingrid Tarrant have been leading virtually separate lives." – ***Daily Mail*, 15 September 2006.**

"Thankfully, Ingrid's relationship with Chris is stronger and happier than ever. And she has given us her top tips for a happy marriage..." – ***Mirror*, 5 October 2006.**

"Love-split Chris Tarrant has been having a 10-year affair with a blonde deputy head." – ***Mirror*, 13 September 2006.**

HAS Petronella Wyatt again shamelessly used her position as number two on the *Mail*'s Ephraim Hardcastle column to attack a former lover?

Past amours of Wyatt to be assailed by Hardcastle include David McAlpine and Boris Johnson MP. Recently Hardcastle carried a venomous little piece about Tory MP David Ruffley, saying how mean he was about paying taxi fares when with an ex-lover.

Fact: Wyatt was Ruffley's former girlfriend. What was perhaps less well known is why Ruffley split from Wyatt. One day he received a guttural telephone call from Petsy's Hungarian-born mother, Verushka, saying: "Vy vill you not make an honest voman of my daughter?" A day or so later Ruffley called the whole thing off. Instead of attacking her ex-beau, should Petsy not perhaps use Hardcastle to attack her mum?

"THIS year I have seen something in our conference coverage that was unique and exciting," gushed *Guardian* bigwig Emily Bell in her column on 23 September, enthusing over the experimental techniques of photographer Dan Chung, whose 360° panoramic photographs of events in Brighton and Manchester are displayed on the paper's website.

"Dan is one of what I hope will be a growing number of journalists who will push the boundaries of what new technologies can add to journalism and storytelling."

Sadly, Chung is not quite so appreciative of his employer's efforts. Setting up his hi-tech camera to snap Cherie Blair in the round in Manchester on Sunday, he was asked by the prime minister's wife if he was getting paid extra for his efforts. "No," replied the disgruntled snapper. "We're all going on strike."

Indeed, *Guardian* staff are currently threatening industrial action over, among other things, the fact that staff working in new technologies get paid considerably less than their colleagues on the paper!

"SHOP Your Children, Says Reid", was freesheet *thelondonpaper's* front-page splash last Wednesday, over news that the Home Secretary had addressed a meeting in Leyton, east London.

"Reid faced fierce criticism from the audience on the government's actions in Iraq," revealed hack Eugene Henderson. "But he rejected suggestions that British foreign policy was to blame for the 7 July bombings."

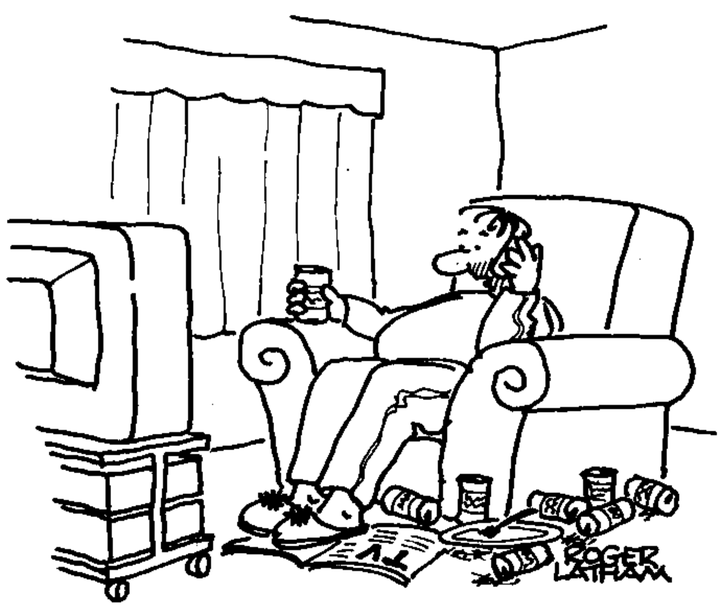
Curiously the paper made no mention of the event that led most of that evening's news bulletins and featured heavily in the following day's papers, the heckling and subsequent expulsion from the meeting of radical activist Abu Izadeen, who demanded of Mr Reid: "How dare you come to a Muslim area?"

Perhaps Henderson hadn't noticed – hardly surprising, since in order to meet his paper's deadline, he wrote his thorough piece covering the question and answer session long before the Home Secretary had even set off for Leyton. Just the sort of hard-hitting investigative work we can expect more of in the age of the freebie!

THE Edinburgh Film Festival this year left the *Telegraph*'s esteemed film critic SF Said roundly unimpressed with the selections of the outgoing artistic director, Shane Danielsen.

"Danielsen's predecessor, Lizzie Francke, opened her festivals with titles such as *Dancer in the Dark*, *Amélie* and *Ratcatcher*," he wrote. "They made big statements about the nature of the festival, underlining its commitment to showing the very best new films, and creating a real sense of occasion. Under Danielsen, Edinburgh has lost that special feeling; now it falls to his successor, Hannah McGill, to rebuild it."

Would this be the same Lizzie Francke who hired one SF Said as a programmer at the Edinburgh Film Festival? And would this be the same Shane Danielsen who fired him? Is it possible that the venerable SF is now fishing for a new job from Hannah McGill?



"Oh hi, you're lucky to catch me in"

"THE practice of placing gaunt and emaciated women on the covers of magazines next to stories deprecating their excessive thinness has become a cliché of our times," Michael Gove thundered in his *Times* column last week.

"And a dangerous one at that… The inescapable conclusion we are invited to draw is that unnatural thinness puts any celebrity where every celebrity longs to be – on the front page."

Alas! In the same day's *Times*, no less than a third of the front page was filled with a photo of an excessively thin model – under the headline "Skinny models are *so* over, says Paul Smith". No doubt Gove is already preparing a follow-up piece lambasting super-skinny *Times* editor Robert Thomson.

INTERVIEWING John Malkovich in the *Observer* two months ago, Lynn Barber asked about his alleged hatred of Robert Fisk, the *Indie*'s Middle East correspondent.

"No one has thinner skins than journalists, in my experience, and I come from a family of them," he replied. "They can dish it out but they can't take it. But the reason I don't like the topic, why I don't really say anything about a whiner like Fisk, is it gives them more oxygen."

Prescient words: Fisk's lawyers fired off a letter threatening to sue. The *Observer* has now been forced to apologise and to remove all Malkovich's comments about the *Indie* hack from its online archive – thus giving him even less oxygen.

Number crunchings

7

- Articles about Africa in Independent's special Africa Issue, guest-edited by Giorgio Armani
- Articles about fashion in Independent's special Africa Issue, guest-edited by Giorgio Armani

THE *Daily Mail* was predictably outraged by Paul Burrell's attack on Princes William and Harry for failing to follow his example and "wave a flag" for their late mother.

"The former royal butler was last night accused of 'stooping to an unprecedented low'," the paper stormed on its front page. "His cynical criticism of Princes William and Harry, who already regard him beneath contempt for previous revelations about their mother, left friends and courtiers furious… The princes are said to feel 'deeply betrayed' following fresh claims by their mother's former butler about her love life."

On page 20 of the same day's *Mail*, the paper continued its serialisation of Sarah Bradford's biography of Diana, beneath the headline "Sexually rejected by Charles – who she thought might be gay – the Princess desperately sought consolation in a series of affairs."

SINCE joining *Observer Woman* in January, alternative health columnist Susan Clark has persistently plugged online complementary medicines shop Victoria Health, dropping its web address into her column every month.

In January it was a suggestion on where to get two supplements to boost testosterone; in February a gel for gum disease; in March baldness treatment Superior Hair ("exclusive" to Victoria Health); in April a flower essence sleep remedy; in May a joint support formula; in June a brand of liver cleansing milk thistle; in July reed yeast rice for cholesterol; and in August a tooth whitening product made from juniper berries.

Obviously Clark's a big fan of the online store, but what's this? Take a look at the sales pitch for Victoria Health's new Viva VH Club. "Susan Clark is our newly appointed editorial director of Viva VH," it says. Loyalty certainly pays.

DIRTY DES and his titles aren't known to mince their words, and last Wednesday's *Daily Star* was happy to report that "a leading welfare charity was celebrating last night after winning a top award for plain speaking".

Norwood, "which helps children and families cope with hardship and disability", had won the prize for best annual report at the Third Sector Excellence Awards, where "judges praised the 'brilliant' literature…"

While the rest of Fleet Street ignored the story, the *Daily Express* also covered it – but not, obviously, because the charity's new president is none other than Richard "Dirty" Desmond himself.

Though both papers proudly recorded this fact, neither bothered to recall the storm in the Anglo-Jewish community that accompanied his appointment, with editorials and letters in the *Jewish Chronicle* questioning the suitability of having a children's charity presided over by the porn-TV baron responsible for TelevisionX – which advertises itself as "four fuck-filled cum-soaked channels for the price of one… cunt-pounding action".

Might TelevisionX itself win an excellence award for plain-speaking one day?

NEWSPAPER competitions offering cars and vans as prizes normally feature brand new models. But not the *Daily Star*, where VW campervans (or "fuck trucks" as visiting Aussies call them) have been pulling in the punters on phonelines at £1.50 a minute for chairman Richard Desmond.

As production ceased some years back and brand new ones are unavailable, Des's promotions people have been trawling the back streets of Islington and auctions in Essex for whatever cheap remnants are available. Rust, moss and torn roof linings are a common feature of the "fucked trucks", so the paper's Mac wizards have had to work their magic before touched-up photos of the prizes can appear in the rag.

PS: Even Richard Hammond's 300mph smash gave Des a chance to increase his profits. Last Friday's *Star* offered readers "your chance" to send a get-well message to the injured *Top Gear* presenter. "Text DSHammond to 82100. Texts cost 25p plus your usual network rate." Touching, no?

MORE on the arrival of former lad-mag hack Ben Knowles as deputy editor of the *Daily Star* – whom Dirty Des appointed without bothering to tell the editor, Dawn Neesom (*Eye* 1167).

Neesom only learnt of the hiring when she noticed Knowles's name in the staff phone-list; and the man whose job and office Knowles took over, Jim Mansell, was equally surprised. Mansell walked out on the evening of Sunday 17 September having edited the paper for the last time… and is now believed to be consulting Messrs Sue Grabbit & Runne.

ANOTHER Monday, another Di exclusive in the *Daily Express*.

"Diana: Scandal of Body Mix-up", screeched the front page on 25 September. "Bungling French officials mistook the body of Princess Diana's lover for her driver in the hours after the fatal crash," reported Peter Allen from Paris. "Professor Dominique Lecomte registered driver Henri Paul with the number 2146. But this had already been assigned to Dodi Fayed's body and Paul should have been given number 2147."

So, is this the explanation for one of the paper's favourite bugbears, the "blood samples which were said to prove that Paul was high on drink and drugs" when he crashed the car carrying Princess Diana? Er, no; for that would mean Dodi was the one necking booze, Prozac and diapride for several months prior to the crash. And that would not please his father Mohamed, driving force behind the *Express*'s endless campaign, at all. Instead, the paper concluded, the mix-up proved that the disputed blood samples must "belong to someone not connected to the crash".

LABOUR CONFERENCE SPECIAL

CALLED TO ORDURE

CENTRAL Manchester has not been caused this much inconvenience since the IRA came visiting with one of their bombs. A large area in the middle of the city has been sealed off by gun-toting police, bulky-jacketed bodyguards and concrete tank traps. And still Peter Mandelson managed to sneak in!

Labour came to Manchester for the first time since 1917 because traditional conference venue Blackpool was too tatty and working-class; and because the party's northern cabal was fed up slogging down to south-coast Brighton and Bournemouth. Plenty of anti-southern venom could be overheard in the GMEX foyer.

Delegates were thrown the usual opening-session guff about "reigniting the fire in the forge", Nye Bevan's legacy and "setting the agenda for the next 10 years". No one believed it. The rank and file are now merely there for decorative effect.

Conference agenda committee chair Margaret Wheeler, who in a different life could have played Rosa Klebb, forbade any mention of controversial policies such as school admissions or the replacement of Trident. With Tony Blair having already hinted that the Trident matter will be decided this year, Labour members may not get another chance to have a say on the next generation of nukes.

"We're being gagged!" cried one innocent youth. Wheeler spouted something about "rule 3C, two point eight", declared that "emergency debates about the leadership election are unconstitutional", and the youth was led away, presumably to be stripped down for tallow.

Great. The whole country is talking about Gordon Brown's bid to unseat Blair – except here at the conference of the very party involved.

Our politicians and policy makers love to pass laws against alcohol abuse but there's nowhere quite as drunken or greedy as a Labour or Tory conference.

At one of the city's Chinese restaurants on Sunday night a Labour MP being entertained by a Sunday newspaper hack was heard loudly ordering "the banquet special" (price £40), proudly patting his girth, and proceeding to gorge his way through endless courses of Cantonese food for the next two hours, gossiping and betraying colleagues in an ever louder voice. All this was watched from a neighbouring table by an appalled Labour chief whip, Jacqui Smith.

Mancunian police, normally so efficient at dealing with football rowdies, did not raise a finger on Sunday night as delegates staggered from the Amicus marquee into the Midland Hotel, or teetered off to the Bridgewater Hall, where the pro-Brown *New Statesman* held its customary Bacchanalian revel. Waitresses at the *Staggers* bash looked genuinely shocked at the amount of drink being consumed.

At the Progress rally in the Usdaw marquee an apparently sober Mandelson slagged off Brown, thus wrecking the fragile truce reached in cabinet between Gordon and Tony's partisans. While Mandelson was still on his feet, word of his betrayal was communicated to Brown's lieutenant, Ed Balls, who was on the platform at another fringe meeting. Balls could be seen texting furiously to Brown's spin doctor Damian McBride, who was with the chancellor at yet another event (the launch of a book of his speeches – just one copy sold). Wellington and Napoleon could only have dreamed of such efficient communications in the height of battle. But any idea that this Labour conference was noble or statesmanlike – or concerned with the lot of the ordinary British voter – can pretty much be discounted.

'Gavel Basher'

LABOUR's commitment to tackling Britain's obesity epidemic and junk food habit seems to have been forgotten in the drive to attract business sponsors to the party conference in Manchester.

For when **Treasury Minister Stephen Timms** gives a speech for the *New Statesman* on "public sector procurement" (ie privatisation), the event will be paid for by the leading privatiser, **Compass Group**.

The company may welcome the PR of having its top spin doctor Paul Kelly sit alongside a government minister. But will it want to remind the audience of the expertise it gained in "public sector procurement" by feeding schoolchildren its infamous Turkey Twizzlers, thus helping inspire chef Jamie Oliver's school dinners campaign? The firm is still complaining about costs in its school meals contracts.

Elsewhere **Public Health Minister Caroline Flint**, whose day job is wrestling with the obesity crisis, will talk about "marketing food and health" on a platform paid for by the **Food Advertising Unit**. This is a front group "composed of multi-national food companies" and advertising firms, set up to head off demands for restrictions on advertising to children.

Flint will speak alongside Tony Palmer of **Kellogg's**, purveyor of Coco Pops Cocorocks and other chocolatey delights.

Tesco, meanwhile, with long-standing marketing ploys aimed at schoolchildren, such as its voucher scheme, is paying for a Work Foundation meeting featuring wannabe prime minister, **Education Minister Alan Johnson.**

Energy

The government's "energy review" is drawing companies to the conference like moths to a lo-energy lightbulb. When **Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks** expounds on the review at a *New Statesman* meeting, he will do so on a platform paid for by the French firm, **EDF,** alongside EDF boss Vincent de Rivaz.

De Rivaz clearly hopes the review will lead to more nuclear energy, an EDF speciality. But he may be less keen to talk about EDF's high prices and massive profits.

National Grid, which owns electricity and gas distribution networks, has also paid for a meeting at which Wicks will talk about the energy review.

Not to be left in the dark, electricity price-hiker **Scottish Power** is also paying for a Fabian meeting with **Trade Secretary Alistair Darling.**

Money

The money lenders will be out in force in Labour's temple, with **Provident Financial** bankrolling much ministerial time.

Ed Miliband, minister for the third sector, is pencilled in to appear at two meetings at which he will discuss moving "from philanthropy to partnership" and "serving a community". He will be joined by **Transport Minister Douglas Alexander**. Meanwhile junior **Pensions Minister James Purnell** will expound on "labour values".

There is nothing very philanthropic of course about the high interest rates Provident charges poor borrowers; and it recently escaped having a cap put on the interest it charges its "sub prime" customers.

Elsewhere "Pensions" Purnell will appear at an invitation-only Fabian do sponsored by **Scottish Widows**. Will the firm's advice on pensions reform be based on its own financial records, which include being fined £1.9m in 2003 for mis-selling useless "precipice" bonds to savers, and being forced last year to set aside £300m to compensate buyers of ineffective "endowments"? Don't bank on it.

Axa is also sponsoring a series of meetings with top Labour figures, organised by the Work Foundation. **Secretary of State for Work and Pensions John Hutton** and **John Denham MP** will join Axa boss Steve Folkard in discussing "who pays for Granny?"

Axa itself isn't always keen to pay out. In 2003 it was fined £500,000 by the Financial Services Authority for "serious failings" when pushing savings with adverts fronted by Carol Smillie and June Whitfield. The ads made a pretty risky investment sound better and safer than it was. Axa is also pressing hard on "time limiting" complaints about underperforming endowments.

Health

Health Minister Patricia Hewitt is speaking on an Axa-funded platform too. As one of Britain's leading health insurers, Axa has an interest in weakening the NHS. Its own health "product", though, has been criticised – as when the firm refused to pay for Herceptin treatments on insured cancer patients, until it was forced to do so by an outcry.

BUPA, meanwhile, will celebrate its recent winning of a contract to carry out NHS operations by sponsoring a Fabian meeting addressed by **Care Minister Ivan Lewis**. For good measure, **Health Minister Andy Burnham** will deliver a Fabian lecture paid for by the drug firm **Sanofi Aventis**.

Environment

Derek Ward, British boss of the French computer firm **Atos Origin** (which has benefited from government contracts for the troubled NHS "E Booking" system and the ID cards scheme), likes to get close to ministers. At Manchester he will appear alongside **Environment Minister Ben Bradshaw** to talk about green issues for the *New Statesman*.

Mobile phones

O2 is sponsoring a meeting with **Police Minister Tony McNulty** (O2, lest we forget, supplies the police "airwave" radios, a contract it wants to extend to other emergency services.) **Virgin Mobile** is paying for a Fabian jamboree with **"Social Exclusion" Minister Hilary Armstrong, Treasury Minister Ed Balls, Charles Clarke** and **Harriet Harman**. It is also sponsoring a Fabian bash with **Alan Johnson** and **Housing Minister Yvette Cooper**.

Gambling

Camelot will sponsor a meeting with **Culture Minister David Lammy** and Brownite former minister **Michael Wills** called "renewing citizenship" which is a thin disguise for the firm's real aim which is "renewing our licence" as bids are prepared for the 2009 lottery award. Camelot presumably hopes ministers believe that wasting money gambling is the common feature of what the meeting calls "the new Britishness".

Airports

Why is airports operator **BAA** paying for a meeting on the Olympics with **Sports Secretary Tessa Jowell**? Surely not because it hopes to use the 2012 Olympics to lever government support over a multitude of issues, from backing the £400m "Airtrack" rail link from the new Terminal 5 into central London, to resisting calls for a break up of BAA?

Environment

Environment Minister Ian Pearson will talk about "Environmental Justice: empowering local communities" at a meeting sponsored by the water firm **United Utilities**. Recent examples of environmental justice recorded by the Environment Agency include six fines totalling £100,000 imposed on United Utilities for polluting the Mersey (twice), killing fish in Rochdale and pouring sewage into rivers in Cheshire, Stockport and elsewhere.

TUC SPECIAL

FOREMOST among the trades union leaders at the TUC conference in Brighton who were keen for Tony Blair to step down as prime minister sooner rather than later were Dave Prentis of Unison, Derek Simpson of Amicus and the GMB's Paul Kenny.

That Prentis and Kenny are keen to see the back of Blair should surprise no one, not least as it is often Unison and GMB members who risk losing their jobs or having them transferred to the private sector in government "outsourcing" initiatives.

The fate of many Unison members who work for NHS Logistics, which for the time being still procures supplies for the NHS, is a case in point. Staff there are taking industrial action in protest at the decision to award private firm DHL/Novation the contract to procure supplies for the NHS (see *Eye* 1165).

And as for Amicus leader Simpson, when he was asked during the conference by *Newsnight*'s Jeremy Paxman to list his policy disagreements with Blair, Simpson replied: "How long have you got?" With such unbridled ill-feeling directed at Blair it would be unimaginable if the same unions were still bankrolling New Labour – but that is exactly what is happening.

According to the Electoral Commission, which publishes donations made to political parties, during the first six months of this year the Labour party received donations totalling £6,194,721, of which £2,552,553 was given by... Unison, Amicus and the GMB – more than 40 percent of the total donations received by Labour during that time.

The GMB made 37 separate donations amounting to £720,953, Unison 60 donations amounting to £840,499, while Amicus topped the list by giving just under £1m to a party still run by a leader whom Simpson says he cannot abide. What trade union members are to make of their leaders passing on their subs to a party that is destroying their jobs one can only imagine.

PS: Amicus leader Simpson also chose odd grounds on which to castigate the "ultra-Blairites" while giving his backing to Gordon Brown at the conference.

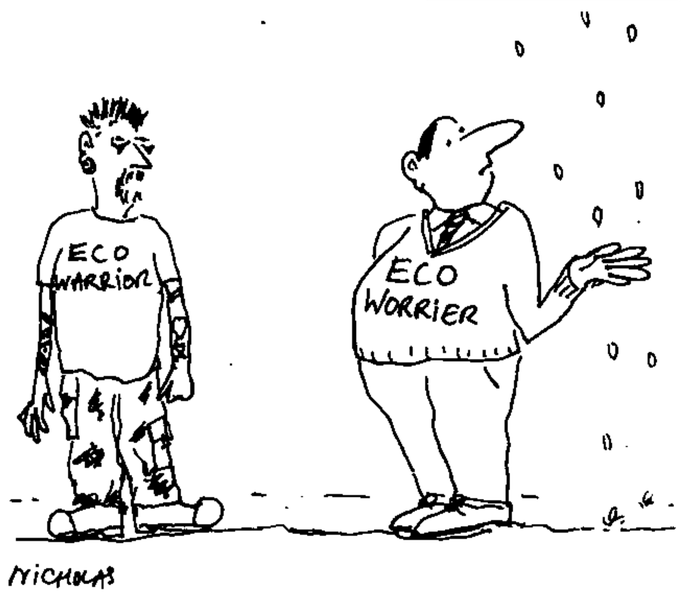
The Blairites' greatest sin, he said, was "allowing private companies to squeeze profits out of hard-pressed public services". As *Eye* readers know, the greatest source of profits from public services has been Brown's beloved private finance initiative, from which builders, bankers and consultants have made billions since 1997.

JUST FANCY THAT

NEWSPAPER recruitment advertisements for Hilary Benn's Department for International Development (DfID) boldly claim the department is "leading the fight against world poverty" – a claim which has some resonance when the salaries on offer at DfID are examined.

On 13 September the department advertised 17 posts in the *Guardian*, including those for five directors, seven deputy directors and five heads of profession. The minimum starting salary for the directors was £80,000 – rising to £160,000 – while the other 10 posts all attracted a minimum starting salary of £55,000.

Even if the 17 posts were all recruited at the bottom of the salary scale, this still produces an annual wage bill of £1,060,000.



Warballs

"If we look at the media today there will be one dominant topic – 9/11 remembrance... Do we believe we are winning this war? Statistics show only 1 in 7 of us believe that the US and UK are winning the war on terror and two thirds of us think the battle will continue beyond our life time. Sobering.

"Today I read a passage in the bible that said 'Must the sword devour forever? Don't you realise that this will end in bitterness? How long before you order your men to stop pursuing their brothers?' It was written nearly 3,000 years ago and it made me wonder about the future of the human race. Are we really evolving?

"So in the spirit of looking forward I want to let you know that Sony Financial Services are pleased to announce that 0% finance is available on all Sony Professional products and solutions from 8 September 2006. This is a fantastic opportunity to secure your competitive advantage by acquiring the most current Sony technology for your business. But hurry, this limited period offer is only available until the 30th September 2006.

"Let's keep business as usual. It's not what the terrorists want, so it must be one way to win." – **Email circular from Simon Lissak of Sympli Ltd, audio/visual equipment dealers.**

Number crunchings

£3.7m ■ Amount Labour raises in subscriptions from its 198,000 members

£4.2m ■ Amount taxpayers are spending on security for the party conference this week

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

THE European Parliament has closed the book on the Strasbourg overcharging scandal (see *Eye* 1162) in customary fashion... with the mildest possible slap on the wrist.

The city authorities, who ripped off European taxpayers to the tune of €80m by hiking up the rents of properties leased to the parliament, have simply been told not to be so "discourteous" in the future. There will be no other sanction.

What's more, the parliament has decided the best way to avoid rip-offs in future is to buy the buildings it has been renting for a quarter of a century at inflated prices, thus chucking yet another €143m Strasbourg's way.

Such amazing generosity comes as the calls within the EU to stop the Parliament's monthly trip to Strasbourg are growing louder and louder. Criticism of the second seat, which costs €200m to run a year, has been going on for years, but Brussels might now be forced to open a debate on the issue. An anti-Strasbourg petition launched by Swedish MEPs has collected its millionth signature, and even some commissioners are now openly worrying about the damage Strasbourg does to the EU's credibility.

So, by the time the parliament's real estate purchase goes through, Strasbourg might have been abandoned, leaving European taxpayers with €143m worth of white elephants – and no doubt further bills as the new owners try to offload the buildings. How's that for joined-up government?

Number crunchings

£220,000 ■ Cash spent by Department for Constitutional Affairs on employing Lord Chief Justice

£220,000 ■ Cash spent by Department for Constitutional Affairs on employing "life coaches" for staff

DAM AND BLAST

FIVE years after Balfour Beatty pulled out of the Ilisu Dam project in Turkey (*Eyes passim*), plans to build it are back on.

In August Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that the scheme was to go ahead, this time with an Austrian company, VA Tech Hydro, leading the international consortium.

The dam will still displace 78,000 Kurds who live in the ancient town of Hasankeyf and surrounding villages and it will have enormous environmental effects, including potentially cutting off rivers that flow into Iraq and Syria. After huge opposition in the UK, Balfour Beatty pulled out of the plan in 2001, saying it saw no resolution to the "commercial, environmental and social issues inherent in the project".

While VA Tech Hydro is seeking export credit guarantees from the Austrian, Swiss and German governments and fresh challenges are being prepared at the European Court of Human Rights by archaeologists, environmentalists and human rights campaigners, this summer the European Commission gave VA Tech Hydro second prize at the European Business Awards for the Environment – so that's all right then!

SAME OLD TORY

JAMES GRAY, the MP for North Wiltshire who was exposed last week as a shit for conducting an affair while his wife was being treated for breast cancer, was also outed last week... as a Tory.

Voters in North Wilts were bemused this summer to read a glossy, green, self-promoting circular from Gray, their MP for the last nine years, outlining his activities in parliament and the constituency (well, some of his activities, anyway).

Nowhere, not even in the small print relating to his constituency office, did the leaflet reveal that Gray was a Conservative.

TV

The Sunday Edition (ITV1)
Panorama: Does it have to be Gordon? (BBC1)

JEREMY Isaacs, in his recent memoirs, recounts the struggle he faced at ITV in the 1950s to persuade everyone that it was a good idea to broadcast coverage of parliamentary by-elections. The burden of these paragraphs is that it was a different world back then, but, by coincidence, the book comes out at a time when an executive would face a similar struggle to make the case for serious Westminster journalism.

Politics is a problem for all broadcasters. They have to cover it because their overlords (the government for the BBC, Ofcom for ITV1 and Channel 4) believe that bore-by-bore analysis of parliament is a good thing; but most of the audience would even rather go to church than sit through this kind of stuff on a Sunday. Even at a time of a massive story by political standards – the transfer of the premiership within the Labour party – there's little ratings appetite for the tale, short of Gordon crying about the dead baby or, in an ideal world, Tony flouncing out of Number 10, like Sebastian in *Little Britain*, shouting "bitch!" at the Brownites.

The Sunday Edition is ITV1's latest attempt to solve this paradox of regulatory insistence and audience indifference. The show replaces Dimbleby, following the younger son of Richard's falling out with the commercial channel, and therefore marks another stage in the end of the days when the big political presenters (Frost, Walden, Dimbleby, etc) got their surnames in the title. The BBC1 Sunday replacement for *Frost* (*Sunday AM*) contains a disguised reference to the host's name, but *The Sunday Edition* seems to have been formatted to be fronted by anyone, which is possibly bad news for the current incumbents.

They are *Observer* columnist Andrew Rawnsley and news cutie Andrea Calderwood. The only possible title alluding to their initials would be Sunday AA, which might be appropriate as the opening editions were a car-wreck.

The show begins with graphics of the pair walking around the studio in pastel silhouette and, in line with current editorial wisdom in TV news, begins with the hosts standing up at the front of the studio before, during the news bulletin, they go to the back and sit down to conduct some interviews.

The impression is given that Rawnsley and Calderwood are an

equal partnership – they are frequently in two-shot, with the non-speaking one not sure where to look – but his name comes anti-alphabetically first in the credits, he speaks first in each segment and gets to conduct the item called, with baptismal desperation, The Big Interview. Even when Andrea got to "throw" to the newsreader, he appeared to say "thanks, Andrew." However, the female supposed co-host's moment comes at the end when, in a slot called Sunday Supplement, she gets to talk to "Anne Widdecombe on smacking." Such desperate lunges at populism alternate with completely unglossed insider references from Rawnsley to "a David Davis moment".

This kind of show used to be on at lunchtime but there are viewers for soap or sport now in those slots and so *The Sunday Edition* goes out at 11am in order to avoid hitting BBC1's *The Politics Show* at noon and further dividing a tiny audience.

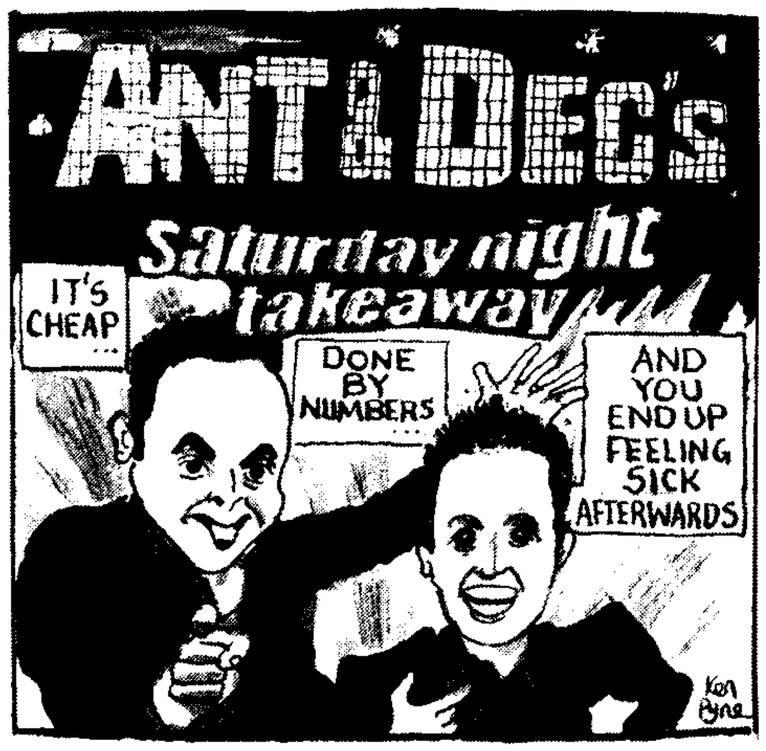
ITV1 is using the old ratings-boosting trick of including frequent short news updates in the format but, unfortunately on Sunday, the bulletins simply didn't dare cover the fact that the big news of the morning was what Blair had said on *Sunday AM*. Rawnsley, for his Big Interview, was stuck with John Reid, who kept refusing to answer questions about the Labour leadership until the satellite link went down and Rawnsley was reduced to shouting: "Can you hear me, Mr Reid?"

Twelve hours later, the host of the rival *Sunday AM* turned up on **Panorama,** profiling the man "overwhelmingly likely" to be the next Prime Minister. This was the opposite approach to politics: no risk now of references to a "David Davis moment". The line here was that the business of Westminster not only mattered but was also wacky and fun.

This wasn't surprising because *Panorama*, preparing for its risky return to the weekday peak-time schedules, is currently in a show-of-the-people phase. The previous week's special on the alleged "bung culture" in football was dismayingly simplistic, constantly claiming that dishonest transfer practices were "wasting the fans' money", when the truth is that the majority of dosh sloshing around the big clubs these days comes from Rupert Murdoch or Nike.

Marr's "Does it have to be Gordon?" was equally glib. The first talking head was Sir Alan Sugar, a tangential witness to Brown's rise but a bigger television name than the Irwin Seltzers, Lance Prices, Charlie Whelans and Ed Ballses who later popped up. Alternating between bright blue and bright red shirts – presumably in some attempted signal of political balance – Marr jittered about the place, delivering one link while driving and another while strolling through Brighton with his laptop bag slung awkwardly over his shoulder. The show soon came to rely disproportionately on one of its interviews, but you couldn't complain: a lot of Balls was at least an honest assessment of what the programme had to tell us.

'Remote Controller'



DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Which piece of music by Tchaikovsky features explosions, cannon fire and gunshots?

Contestant: "The Flight of the Bumblebee."

Robinson: In music, which famous composer wrote a set of pieces known as "the Enigma Variations"?

Contestant: Andrew Lloyd Webber.

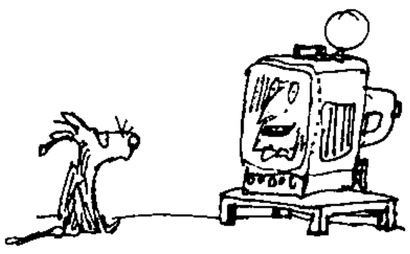
Robinson: In UK politics, which party leader's surname is an anagram of "romance"?

Chantelle (from *Celebrity Big Brother*): Love.

Robinson: No, it was David Cameron.

Chantelle: Who?

MEDIA NEWS



THERE were two big foreign stories for the BBC to tackle last week – rioting over a corrupt government in Hungary and a military coup in Thailand.

This proved rather embarrassing for the BBC World Service. Six months ago it abolished 10 of its foreign-language services – including those in Hungary and Thailand. There were loud protests from MPs and the NUJ, who warned that the cuts "would mean the loss of a source of vital information", but the Bush House boxwallahs decided that since democracy was now secure in both countries their inhabitants no longer required independent news from the BBC.

Most of the corporation's Thai and Hungarian experts were duly axed – as became only too apparent last week, when the crisis revealed a startling lack of experienced staff in Budapest and Bangkok, not to mention Bush House and White City.

WHAT message does Professor Lord Winston, top media don and Groucho Marx lookalike, have for the nation's parents?

Last year he warned of the harm being done to their children by TV and computer games. "Children are sleeping between two and five hours less than their parents did at the same age," he said in BBC TV series *Child of Our Time*. "This affects their performance at school and their behaviour at home and some of that is down to computer games." He complained that "modern children are spending three to four hours a day in front of a computer or television screen of some kind, often unsupervised".

Now that dozens of children's authors and academics have issued a similar jeremiad, however, Winston seems to be taking a rather different tone. "Television has, in fact, been one of the greatest boons for children," he observes cheerily in the *Independent on Sunday*. As for computer games, they "produce many benefits for children including better problem-solving and improved hand/eye coordination". So there.

STILL no word on who will succeed Stephen Carter as chief executive of Ofcom, but the bookies' favourite is Ed Richards. And who better to run an independent regulator?

Richards is a New Labour apparatchik who drafted the government's communications bill while working as Tony Blair's "media expert" at No 10. His main distinguishing feature at the time was an uncanny ability to support whatever Rupert Murdoch wanted.

Before that he worked for two years as John Birt's head of corporate strategy at the BBC. (He and Birt remain great chums.) And before that, he worked as a researcher for one Gordon Brown.

Clearly he is just the chap to cover the transition from one Labour regime to another. Get on with it, Ofcom!

NEW BIRTSPEAK

"WHAT do we offer?

"A more flexible approach to building new ways of working right across the development and production process. We will offer tailored workshops and courses, consultancy, coaching and mentoring to individuals, teams, studios or divisions in working with a structured creative process, synthesising audience understanding to find new insights and stimulus, creative facilitation techniques, generating, building and refining tools for multi-platform innovation, generic and genre-specific storytelling, and writing from foundation to advanced level."

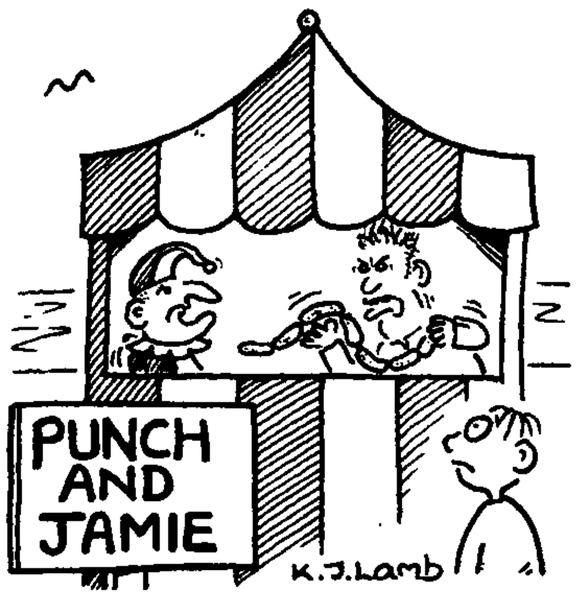
— BBC Creativity & Audience

CHANNEL 4 News **reported Omar Khyam's admission in court that he had visited Kabul and was "impressed" with the Taliban by flashing up the usual stock shots of bearded and turbaned Taliban fighters wielding their Kalashnikovs and radios.**

But on closer inspection one of the figures shown was clearly Ahmad Massoud, leader of the Northern Alliance and mortal enemy of the Taliban… who despised him so much they assassinated him in 2001.

RED FACES at Channel 4 following a recent advertisement for adult learning.

In it a "gremlin" explodes in a spatter of green slime as a woman finally decides to sign on for a course. This was doubly eye-catching… coming as it did in the middle of the Channel 4 documentary, *Cult of the Suicide Bomber*.



*"Have you seen the fat content of these sausages? And all the ****ing additives – it's disgusting!"*

THE NEOPHILIACS

"The Internet is the new Afghanistan." – BBC World.

"Seventy is the new fifty." – Esther Rantzen, *Camden New Journal*.

"No sex is the new sex." – *Vancouver Sun*.

"Connection – it's the new sex, apparently." – *Guardian*.

"Sleep is the new sex." – *Daily Mail*.

"Clearly, golf is the new sex." – *Independent*.

AD NAUSEAM

A MINOR hullabaloo last week after one of the hilarious new *Spectator* posters was rejected by London Underground.

The *Spectator's* current tagline is "Champagne for the brain". It goes on to illustrate its alleged intellectual pizzazz with one of advertising's hoariest old ruses, splicing the "–ATOR" part of the masthead with another image to create a new word that the magazine feels reflects its editorial stance. Thus one poster reads "Agit-ator", where "Agit" is a piece of graffiti.

Unfortunately for the *Spec* and its agency Large Smith Walford, London Underground doesn't allow graffiti images on adverts, lest they encourage copycats, so the ad was nixed, altered and put up all over again.

On the upside, however, the campaign has encouraged some ingenious subvertising with punters adding graffiti of their own. One scrawl spotted in north London, quite possibly administered by one of the magazine's female employees, has been altered to read "Fornic-ATOR".

LUVVIES

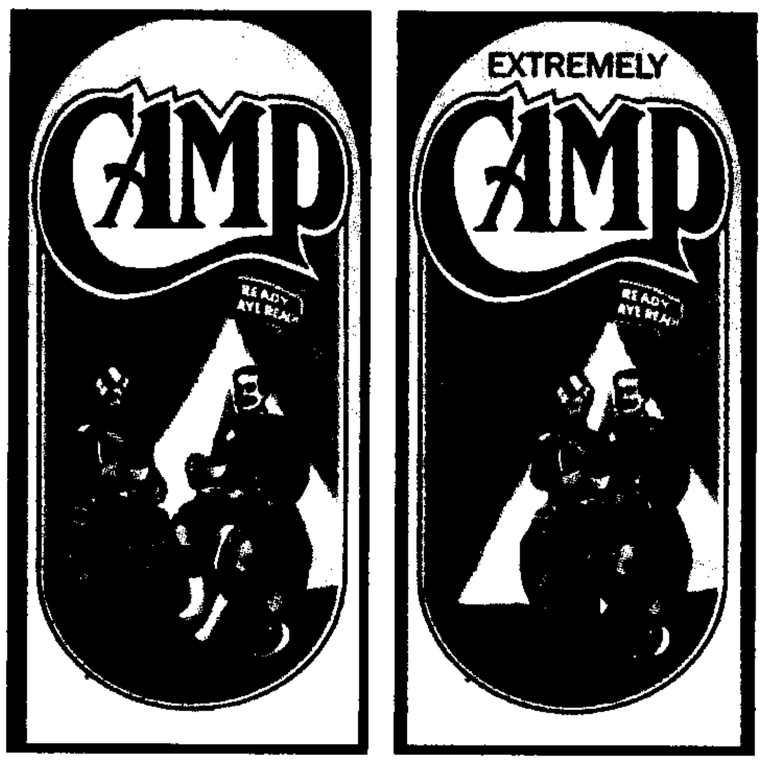
"I don't know if there really are mistakes in life," he says in a moment of reflection. "I think you have choices to make and the biggest choice that I made is I tried to save the world and forgot to save myself."

DAVID HASSELHOFF
G2

Submitted by John Samuelson.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

The Next Development in the Great PC Coffee Advertisements Saga?



(Thanks to readers)

SPOTTED at Gatwick airport McDonald's, before security: a poster of a bottle of Tropicana Orange Juice beneath the caption: "Why not take one of these on board?"

Graffiti answer: "because you might get shot".

THERE will surely never be a better example of the now-legendary Curse of Cash-In (*Eyes passim*) than Chris Tarrant's current advert for a Nintendo handheld game.

In a priceless moment of adland irony that could only be matched by Pol Pot being hired to flog life insurance, Tarrant can currently be seen advertising a game called "Dr Kawashima's Brain Training". In one TV spot, Tarrant forgets his wedding anniversary and is hauled over the coals by his wife, Ingrid. But after a session playing the game, his memory improves.

Not enough, however, to remember to tell Ingrid about the 10-year affair we now know Tarrant has been conducting – and would still have been enjoying at the time the Leo Burnett ad was filmed earlier this year.

Tarrant has also been fronting National Brain Fitness Week, and said recently: "It's amazing to think how many people treat their body like a temple while neglecting the most important organ of all – their brain!" For Tarrant, it transpires, another organ is equally as important, and he has been taking great pains to ensure it is not neglected. Let us hope the money he was paid for the ads helps leaven the pain of his whopping divorce settlement.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

LAST WEEK the Barbican laid on a cosy little lunch for arts hacks to persuade them what a wonderfully good use of £30m the now-complete refurbishment of Britain's ugliest arts centre has been. But behind the smiles and self-congratulation there was a distinct half-heartedness about it all – and clear signs that managers are on their guard about what happens next.

After years of tinkering, the auditorium acoustic is better (though not nearly as good, or as consistent throughout the hall, as the Barbican likes to say), and the on-site cafes marginally improved. But the general environment is as gloomily unwelcoming as ever. And the new foyers, unveiled last week at a cost of £14m, look no less like underground car-parks than the old ones did. In fact it's hard to see what this £14m has achieved beyond some redirected walkways and the imposition of a particularly nasty, 1970s retro, orange-and-brown colour scheme across half the space.

The Barbican is also making much of a dismally unremarkable light-box installation that runs down one side and has been sponsored, as a piece of public art, by the law firm across the road. The Barbican calls it "dramatic". Most concert-goers who walk past it will assume it's a fault in the electrics.

Knowing they haven't made the greatest job of all this, Barbican staff were looking worried. With good reason. Next year the South Bank Centre reopens with what is billed as "a truly spectacular redesign", which will initiate all-out war between the two for punters, profile and revenue.

The Barbican has cobbled together a "25th Birthday" festival to take place next spring – just before the SBC reopening, and a spoiling tactic if ever there was one. But the fear of Barbican staff is that next year will be tough on all fronts. Sir John Tusa, whose steady leadership has steered the unwelcoming centre to deserved artistic pre-eminence among London's concert venues, will retire as managing director: a hard act to follow. And Sir Colin Davis, another steady hand, will retire as chief conductor of the resident London Symphony Orchestra, handing his baton to the brilliant but crazily chaotic and free-wheeling Valery Gergiev. There could be trouble ahead.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

And now she is set to spend the next year on stage at the London Palladium after landing the role of head nun Mother Abyss in the Sound of Music.

Solihull Times

Sandy Wilson's
The Boyfriend

Regent's Park Open Air Theatre

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

WHAT'VE YOU BEEN DOING TODAY, MY DARLING 3 YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER?
I'VE BEEN SKIPPING!
I SKIPPED BREAKFAST, LUNCH, AND SUPPER..... ....MY BODY MASS INDEX IS NEARLY DOWN TO ZERO!!!
AAAAH....

MEDICINE BALLS

5. Cautionary Tales

ONE of the joys of being a doctor is forking out thousands a year for professional indemnity insurance, and then finding out how your money's been spent.

My policy is with the Medical Protection Society, which dutifully sends me a Casebook every three months detailing the biggest cock-ups of the quarter. Usually it's a misdiagnosis or a missed swab, but September's issue highlighted an anaesthetist accused of "harassing" a pregnant woman about her smoking.

In the anaesthetist's defence, smoking clearly harms both mother and baby and we're supposed to remind people of this "opportunistically". Often, pregnancy or a heart attack persuades people to stop, but not in this case. The woman delayed the operating list by nipping out for a fag and her coughing made it hard to put the epidural in. Cue one grumpy anaesthetist.

His advice could perhaps have been more tactfully phrased ("You've seen your daughter born, if you give up smoking you might see her get married too") and the timing and tone could probably have been better. But it seems harsh to claim this contributed to the woman's post-natal depression.

The patient also felt that her pain control was inadequate; but expert witnesses decided the technical care was appropriate and competent. However, the doctor's communication skills were found to be lacking and the case was settled for just £44,500, plus costs.

The message is clear: it isn't enough to be technically competent and tell the truth; a doctor has to do it in a way perceived by the patient to be empathic. Given that New Labour is keen for doctors to get tough with those who lead unhealthy lifestyles, we could be in for some very expensive consultations.

On the opposite page was the case of a woman with bipolar disorder on lithium, which interacts with lots of other drugs and needs to have the levels regularly monitored. Alas, her GP practice neglected to do this at all over 12 years, and a prescription of a contra-indicated diuretic tipped her into lithium toxicity.

Suffering from the shakes and constipation, she saw one doctor who gave her diazepam, and another doctor was called in when she became confused and could not stand. He arranged a psychiatric appointment in two months. Her husband then took her to hospital, where the diagnosis was made. She was allegedly in a coma for three weeks, suffering neurological impairment, memory loss and slurred speech. Her claim was settled for £28,000.

The difference in the settlement (£44k for abruptness, £28k for poisoning) may have been down to the difference in the patients. One was private, the other wasn't. God bless the NHS.

M.D.

MISSING PERSONS

WHATEVER has become of Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) chief executive Paul Tiplady?

LDNPA hit the headlines last year over proposals to scrap volunteer-run guided walks because most of those taking part were "middle-aged, middle class white people". It was back in the news in January when a damning audit report criticised management for putting the authority's finances in "a precarious position". Mr Tiplady also oversaw the closure of several information centres around the park.

Then, in April, staff were told that Mr Tiplady was going on sabbatical and a brief statement was made to the local press. Curious, the *Westmoreland Gazette* sent several questions about the nature, purpose and length of the sabbatical to the LDNPA, only to be stonewalled. It was told that the information was exempt from Freedom of Information as to hand it out would breach the Data Protection Act.

The only question that was fully answered was whether LDNPA has a sabbatical scheme for employees, to which the answer was that it, er, "does not have a sabbatical scheme".

The LDNPA later confirmed that Mr Tiplady was still on leave on full pay. His salary band is "between £63,109 and £69,375".

FE NEWS

DESPITE allegations of mismanagement and leaving parlous finances at Keighley College, David Gates was an "interesting" choice as principal at Doncaster College, itself struggling with a £1.8m deficit and 135 redundancies that were the legacy of previous principal George Holmes (see *Eyes passim*).

Gates started at Doncaster in January, but as the new term got underway in the shiny new £65m campus this month, he was nowhere to be seen. Following a meeting of the college's governing body, relating to "certain issues which require further consideration", he is said to be "away from work on leave of absence".

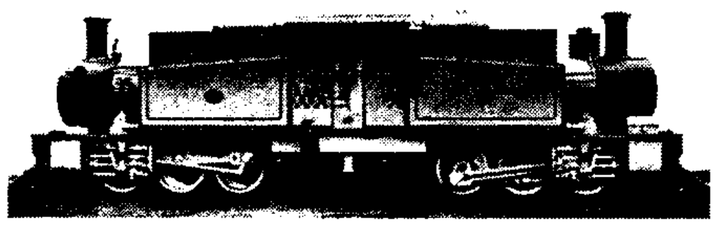
Should Doncaster need to find another new boss, he or she may benefit from a new compulsory qualification in ethics and financial savvy that will soon be required by all college principals taking up new posts. The certificate will be similar to the statutory qualification needed by headteachers and will cover leadership, managing resources and ethical issues. How many principals will fail the test remains to be seen…

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Its students have a reputation for sex and drug-taking, yet Manchester University attracts more applications than any other College"

— *Sunday Times*, September 10, 2006

SIGNAL FAILURES



Pile 'em high

SOMETHING resembling a policy is emerging from New Labour's fumblings on transport. In most European countries the answer to growing demand for transport is to provide more capacity. In Britain, *shortage* of capacity is now a policy goal as it helps government and business squeeze more cash from the public.

Labour's proposed nationwide road pricing would charge premiums for the most congested roads. That's an incentive not to increase capacity on roads or railways, as premiums would fall if roads became less crowded.

Although the privatised railway gets far more subsidy than British Rail ever did, little is being spent on expansion to cater for today's rising demand, let alone people who will try to escape future road tolls. Instead, the government demands increasing premium payments from rail franchises (*Eyes passim*); as capacity is fixed, much of that extra money has to come from exploiting situations where demand exceeds supply, as First Capital Connect did by hiking evening-peak fares.

The same policy can apply to crowded station car parks. The rail watchdog has referred GNER to the government over this summer's car-parking hikes, which raised prices by up to 100 percent. A day's parking at Wakefield station now costs 60 percent more than the return fare to Sheffield, so local trains (not operated by GNER) may suffer loss of custom. That's fine by GNER as passengers *will* pay £10 parking per day if they're making long-distance journeys to London, for which GNER pockets the revenue.

Unusually First ScotRail's subsidy is planned to increase each year, so capacity will increase with demand - or perhaps not. When captains of industry moaned this month about overcrowding on Glasgow-Edinburgh trains, FSR said longer trains were precluded by short platforms at stations between the cities. What it somehow forgot to mention is that it could use longer trains and tell passengers to use specific doors at the shortest platforms.

A north-south high-speed railway would solve the capacity problem on many railways and roads, but with so much of the treasury's future revenue depending on congested roads and packed trains, that's the last thing the government wants. Hence its choice of former British Airways chief Rod Eddington to rubbish the idea (*shurely "conduct an objective review" Ed?*)

PS: Air is the only mode of transport whose capacity Labour is keen to increase. Airports are to be enlarged to keep up with the growth stimulated by over-supply of flights from and within Britain, as reflected in falling air fares. Average long-haul business fares fell by 20 percent from 2000 to 2004, while long-distance first-class rail fares *increased* 27 percent. Thank goodness global warming will wreck millions of lives in the third world rather than Britain.

ALISTAIR Darling did nothing during his four years as Transport Secretary, former rail regulator Tom Winsor claimed in a BBC *Newsnight* debate on 13 September.

Not true. Darling managed to block four English light-rail schemes after more than £280m had been spent developing them. He is regarded as Gordon Brown's lieutenant; presumably denying English cities the modern transport they crave is a sign of what lies in store if Brown becomes PM and Darling chancellor.

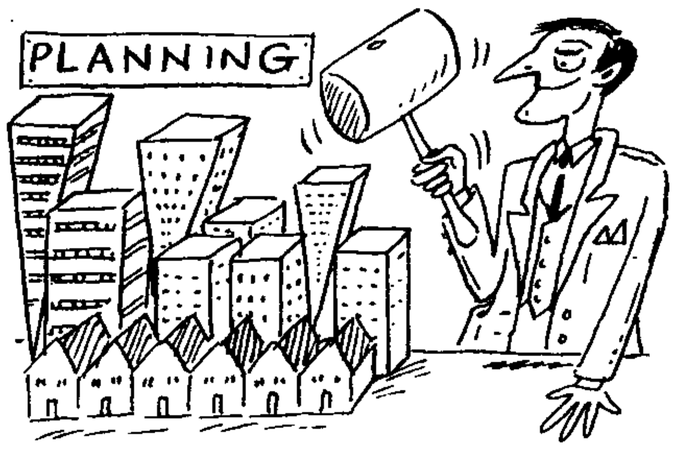
Darling's successor as Transport Secretary has approved part of Manchester's Metrolink expansion, rejected by Darling. The railway to Oldham and Rochdale will convert to light rail – because the neglected infrastructure needs serious investment to continue with normal trains. Extensions to take trams into Oldham and Rochdale town centres – making the service more convenient and cost-effective – are still blocked, Labour still dogmatically opposes English tram schemes, and Darling and Brown can rest assured there's no plot to regenerate and modernise provincial cities and towns south of the border.

NETWORK Rail is holding a series of parties for its south-east maintenance staff and their families, to thank them for reaching safety targets.

But staff wishing to attend the party in Brighton on 17 September were dismayed to find trains diverted or replaced by buses because tracks into Brighton were closed for engineering work that day by… Network Rail!

'Dr B Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS



BOW-WOW

PLANNING officers at Tower Hamlets council in east London weren't exactly sympathetic when residents of *Rainhill Way*, Bow, realised that a new development was being erected 10 feet nearer to their homes than plans had indicated (*Eye* 1165).

When householders complained that the unlawfully-erected houses were blocking their light, one officer told them "if you want to look at green spaces, move to the country", while another said airily it was an "urban myth" that planning permission was required for all new building work.

Fortunately, for once councillors listened to the residents. Earlier this month they rejected a retrospective planning application from developers Countryside Properties, overturning an officers' recommendation to let the development go ahead. Countryside must now demolish its houses, unless an appeal against the decision to Ruth Kelly's Department for Communities and Local Government (Declog) is successful. Lib Dem planning committee member Timothy O'Flaherty said the residents had been "stitched up".

They are not the only ones. In December 2005, CP and its development partner Swan Housing cut off water and heating supplies to nearby tower blocks for three weeks, and gave residents just £75 compensation. In July the power supply to the lift in the Mallard Point tower block was cut off for five days and elderly residents in two other towers were left without drinking water for three days.

According to Alan Cherry CBE, chairman of Countryside Properties: "Our values of integrity, openness, collaboration, innovation and the highest standards of delivery have helped to differentiate us." How true!

ONLY KIDDING

TWO YEARS ago district auditor Les Kidner was asked by opposition group leader Paul Dimoldenberg to look into Westminster council's accounts for 2003-4, following the council's acceptance of £12.3m from its former leader, Dame Shirley Porter, in settlement of the "homes for votes" affair.

The House of Lords had ordered Dame Shirl to pay £42m, but she had had plenty of time to squirrel away her fortune abroad. The council faffed about and was on the verge of giving up the search for her missing millions when BBC's *Today* programme reporter Andrew Hosken unearthed information which revealed where some of the money was.

Westminster eventually decided to settle for the £12.3m "in full and final" – despite repeated warnings that the Dame had much, much, more stashed away. The Audit Commission's chief executive Steve Bundred (*Eyes passim*) endorsed the deal.

Now that Porter is back in London and has had no problem finding £1.5m for a flat off Park Lane, the DA has been asked to take another look at the matter. But Kidner has a problem: if he finds that the £12.3m deal should not have been done, it would be most embarrassing for himself and his irascible boss.

Perhaps this is why Kidner has not bothered to talk to Inspector Knacker, who has already concluded that Dame Shirley could have been prosecuted for perverting the course of justice, as she had sworn in 2002 that she was down to her last £300,000 including, famously, a gold-plated loo seat.

Kidner's refusal to do the obvious – he claims it would be a waste of public funds to talk to Knacker – raises an interesting question. Who audits the auditor?

VERA FUNNY

ISLE of Wight council's new chief executive Joe Duckworth has come up on the rails as a strong contender for this year's Rotten Boroughs Blue-Sky Thinking Award.

Duckworth – affectionately known as "Vera" by staff after telling them he doesn't like to be called "Jack" – is issuing council officers with baseball caps with the word "Thinking" written on the front. Thinking caps – geddit?

Vera's brilliant idea is that council staff should be encouraged to *think of ways to solve problems* – in case they hadn't realised that was their job all along. Isle of Wight's opposition Labour group leader Deborah Gardiner told the local *County Press* she agreed that managers wearing baseball caps would indeed be a "talking point" – although "whether you want your staff to be saying 'look at that bloody idiot' as you stroll by is another matter".

HODGE BODGE

BARKING Labour MP Margaret Hodge took a lot of flak before the May local elections, not least from her own party, when she claimed that eight out of 10 white families in her area were thinking of voting for the BNP.

After 11 BNP candidates were duly elected to Barking and Dagenham council, their group leader Richard Barnbrook cheekily thanked Ms Hodge for her help, saying she had given the party £1m of free publicity.

Now one of Ms Hodge's constituency staff has caused uproar in the local Labour party again... by describing the Labour-run council as "dead racist". Hodge's aide Mohammed Choudhury made a posting on the Muslim Public Affairs Committee (MPAC) website under the name of "Nishath 786", writing that: "We're trying to help them [the Muslim Community Association] with a community centre. The council is dead racist, and does not help any of the community organisations here."

Choudhury's comments outraged his fellow Labour party member, B&D council leader Charles Fairbrass, who has lodged a formal complaint with the party. Hodge duly told Choudhury he should apologise. Alas, so great is councillors' irritation about Hodge's earlier intervention that anything her underling says now is unlikely to rebuild bridges between the MP and the council.

ALI, BYE

NOT a wet eye in the house at Labour Camden council's offices upon news of the departure of Alison Lowton, the director of law and monitoring officer, whose entire department is being abolished to ease her departure.

In the name of making "continuing savings of around £200,000 pa", new chief executive Moira Gibb has axed both positions and replaced them with a new post of "legal adviser" – for which Ms Lowton (*Eyes passim*) has not been invited to apply.

"Alison Lowton will be leaving Camden," Ms Gibb assured councillors, before offering up the usual guff about how wonderful she had been and "wishing her well with her future plans".

Ms Lowton sits on the Adjudication Panel, the Orwellian body which metes out punishment to councillors dragged down by the toils of the Standards Board for England (SBE). She is also the person whose fatuous complaint to the SBE against respected Camden councillor Brian Woodrow (that as chair of development control, he was "biased" against a massive redevelopment scheme at Kings Cross, *Eyes passim*) is still set to go before... the Adjudication Panel for England!

STAKE & CHIPS

SO MUCH for the government's claim that we are all "stakeholders" now.

Though patients who use the NHS or hapless commuters who have to travel on public transport may qualify, amazingly, says Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly, the 10m people who live in the UK's three million council properties are *not* stakeholders – even when the future of their homes is being discussed.

In June, a month after Kelly became head the new Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), she launched a "major consultation" on the future of council housing. "We would like everyone to have a chance to contribute and will be arranging a number of stakeholder discussions over the summer," she promised.

Encouraged by Kelly's speech, Chris Marais, one of four elected tenant representatives on Cambridge council's housing management board, applied to attend his own regional "stakeholder" meeting organised by the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East). But Marais, a leading member of Cambridge Tenants Against Privatisation and a member of the national committee of the Defend Council Housing lobby group, was told he could not attend as tenants were not invited.

The DCLG subsequently confirmed that it backed the GO-East decision to bar Marais as "it did not regard council tenants as stakeholders".

Despite Kelly's boasts, only three regional events were held, other government offices not even bothering to go through the motions of giving "everyone a chance to contribute". Exactly who "stakeholders" are, if they are not those who live in the UK's three million council properties, remains a mystery...

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

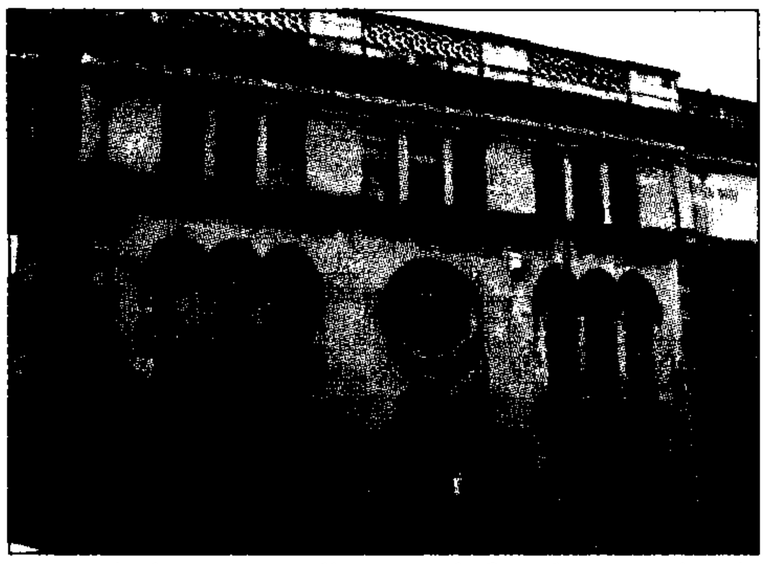
I HEARD YOU GUYS WERE MAULED BY A VICIOUS WILD ANIMAL!
OUR SEAFOOD PLATTER WENT HORRIBLY WRONG..
ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY
LET'S JUST SAY WE WERE WRESTLING A LOBSTER INTO BOILING WATER AND THE LOBSTER WON!

NOOKS and CORNERS

BATH has been notoriously careless of its architectural heritage. The worst damage was done, not by the Luftwaffe in the Baedecker raid in 1942 but by the city council and road engineers in the 1960s and 1970s.

Things are better now the city is a World Heritage Site, but fine and interesting buildings are still going; and strong local opposition remains to demolishing Churchill House near Bath Spa Station (*Eye* 1123), a stone-faced former electricity showroom of 1932. Now the Newark Works on Lower Bristol Road is proposed for demolition.

The Newark Works is not the sort of building to be found in books like *The Georgian Buildings of Bath*. It was built in the 1850s and, although a coherent symmetrical composition faced in Bath



stone, it is not at all genteel for the exterior is enlivened with massive rusticated arches appropriate to its industrial function.

The building is significant on two counts. It was the home of Messrs Stothert & Pitt, a well-known firm which began as ironmongers in the 18th century and came to manufacture steam engines, cranes and other equipment used to build Brunel's Great Western Railway. Secondly, it is an early work by Thomas Fuller.

Fuller is not much of a name in Britain. He was born and trained in Bath but was expelled from the Institute of British Architects for some misdemeanour. However, in 1857 – the year the Newark Works was completed – Fuller emigrated to Canada and, two years later in partnership with Chilton Jones, won the competition for the new parliament buildings in Ottawa. Inspired by Westminster, this is one of the finest Gothic Revival buildings in the world.

Stothert & Pitt moved out of their building in 1987 and it has been derelict since. It is now proposed for demolition to make way for one of Blair's new city academies, designed by the architects Wilkinson Eyre. As this firm was responsible for converting a disused steel mill into the Magna Science Centre in Rotherham, it seems a pity it is not prepared to convert at least part of the Newark Works into a school. The sponsor of the academy is the inventor, designer and vacuum-cleaner man James Dyson, who is always banging on about the importance of technology and innovation so it is regrettable that apparently he has no respect for the history of Stothert & Pitt.

Most pathetic of all is the response of the government. A spokesman, evidently labouring under a misapprehension, has offered an argument reminiscent of Mrs Thatcher's fatuous remark that it was a scandal that half the nation's children were still being educated in Victorian buildings. "Victorian school buildings have served generations of pupils and teachers very well but many cannot meet the needs of the end users in terms of physical accessibility and accessibility to a modern curriculum." Rubbish: of course they can – but the Newark Works is not a Victorian school but a fine industrial building of great interest and importance.

SAVE Britain's Heritage has asked for it to be spot-listed. It should be.

ANOTHER impressive industrial building which seems doomed is Borthwick Wharf by the Thames in Deptford. This is a large, seven-storey brick-faced cold-storage warehouse built in 1934, but it is a powerful and handsome thing partly because it was designed by a very good architect – Sir Edwin Cooper, designer of the old Nurses Home at Greenwich next to the Maritime Museum, the Star & Garter Home at Richmond and the late lamented Lloyd's of London.

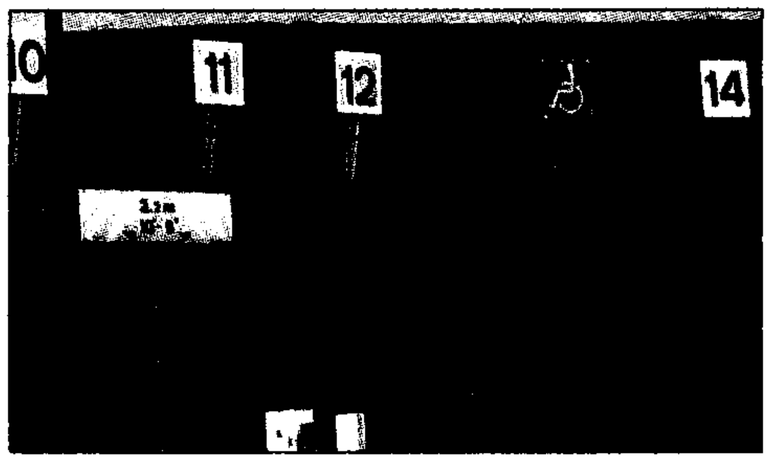
It was rightly proposed for listing by one English Heritage inspector but this was countermanded by another. Together with Payne's Wharf, Borthwick Wharf is to go to make way for a development of 247 flats with an 18-storey tower originally proposed by George Wimpey, even though the local authority designated the site for industrial use in its unitary development plan.

Greenwich Council has, however, managed to turn a disappointment into a scandal. Planning permission was granted on 10 June last but rescinded two months later. This was because the vigorous opponents of the scheme, the Creekside Forum, pointed out a conflict of interest. Cllr Maurine O'Mara, the chair of the planning committee, neglected to mention that she was a trustee of something called the Twinkle Park Trust, a strong supporter which stands to gain £10,000 through a section 106 Agreement with the developer.

The planning application will now have to be resubmitted. But the new owner of the site, Image Group Ltd, wants to press ahead with demolition, having already demolished one ancillary building illegally. Clearing away the structure will involve carting away rubble in lorries to the great inconvenience of those living nearby; but doing this by water has not been considered. Nor has the Countryside Agency been consulted about the effect of all this on the adjacent Thames Path. But what is really sad is that a fine landmark structure, redolent of London's industrial past and capable of intelligent re-use, should be thrown away.

'Piloti'

I-SPY *Channel Tunnel entrance, Folkestone*



Submitted by Stephan Gueorguiev. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs.)*

Down on the Farm

IT HAS always been crucial to controlling diseases such as BSE, foot-and-mouth, bovine TB and avian flu that farmers should be paid full compensation for animals which the government orders to be destroyed. Not only is it natural justice that people should be compensated when a government destroys their property to safeguard the wider community, but farmers might otherwise have a rather strong incentive to conceal the fact that their animals are diseased.

But the European Commission is now proposing that, as from 1 January, drastic cuts should be imposed on the compensation governments are allowed to give to farmers. Only small and medium-sized farms will be eligible to receive any compensation at all; and then only 75 percent of the value of the animals destroyed, and then only if the number of animals destroyed represents more than 30 percent of the farmer's herd or flock.

This means, for instance, that most farmers whose cattle go down with bovine TB will get no compensation, because usually less than 30 percent of their cows are infected at any one time. The same applies to BSE. If a large poultry farmer notices some of his chickens going down with the symptoms of avian flu, he will hardly now be rushing to contact Defra for an expert opinion. The knowledge that his entire flock might be destroyed without a penny in compensation, costing him £100,000 or more, will only encourage him to find some way of quietly getting rid of the sick birds, hoping no one will notice.

Almost as remarkable as the commission's proposal itself has been the obscene haste with which it has been fast-tracked through the system. It was only published and put out to what is laughably known as "consultation" on 18 August, virtually without any publicity. The closing date for comments was Sunday 17 September and the changes are due to come into force in just three months' time.

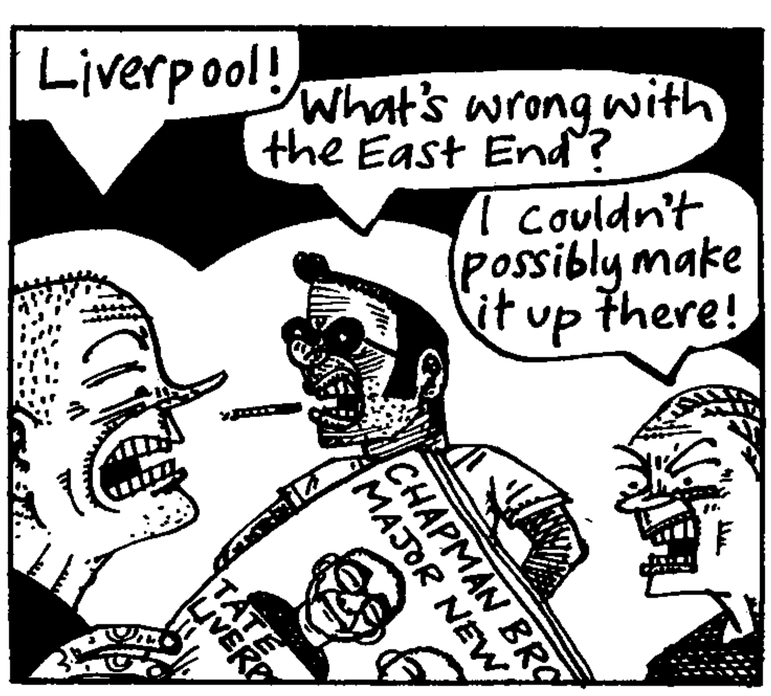
Even our friends in Defra are horrified by the implications of the proposal, not least because they remember how back in 1989 MAFF was forced to revise upwards its original payout of only 50 percent compensation to farmers whose flocks were destroyed in the salmonella scare, when it became clear that this was encouraging farmers to hide problems with their birds for as long possible.

Not surprisingly the NFU, having only belatedly woken up to the proposal, describes it as "totally unacceptable". The National Pig Association says: "It is really crass to give an issue as big as this only a month's consultation." But in the end it matters not a hoot what farmers or even Defra think. Since this is now entirely a "Commission competence", it is up to the officials in Brussels to do whatever they wish, without any need for tiresome voting by agriculture ministers, and all the indications are that by 1 January next year this revolution in the powers of governments to control animal disease will be the law of this and every other country in the EU.

'Muckspreader'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH



Letters

Deepcut Letters

Sir,

Congratulations on your Deepcut Report. A tough read by any standards and commendably comprehensive.

It is staggering that the various incompetent and devious authorities think we will accept any of their conclusions.

DAVID SYKES.

... At last! A comprehensive report on Deepcut that we, the public, have been looking forward to but have been denied. No wonder with lost documents, incompetence and deliberate obfuscation. Where were the officers, I used to ask myself, or the padres, if any? I served seven years in the ranks in World War II in a territorial unit and never came across any serious abuse of power. Your report alone justifies the publication of Private Eye. Let's have more of them.

ROBIN IVY.

... Excellent journalism, those responsible are worthy successors to Paul Foot.

Congratulations to all involved.

Keep this up and I'll have to renew my subscription.

JOEL DAVIES.

... The Deepcut Review states that it "is confident that it has not been unduly handicapped by not having the benefit of Mr Swann's opinion".

That view seems truly ironic since Mr Swann is the independent ballistics expert who has serious doubts about the verdicts in all four sudden deaths.

The Damilola Taylor case finally came to a successful conclusion largely due to the benefit of independent forensic evidence.

A public inquiry which Mr Swann would be willing to assist would remove the climate of secrecy and suspicion.

ALAN BOYD.

Primary targets

Sir,

It is gratifying to see that Inspector Knacker of Monmouth is doing his bit towards fostering public relations in our rural area. On the very afternoon that the new child car seat legislation came into force, there was a significant police presence at the local primary school carrying out checks to see whether the little darlings were being properly secured. All very well, but for the fact that it recently took the same lot over three days to get to the scene of a distraction burglary at the home of an elderly disabled lady, about two miles from the school.

Yours faithfully,
OLD PLOD,

Monmouth.

Go straight through two red lights, left up the one-way street, then first right along the pavement...

Ordure! Ordure!

Sir,

As one of those present at the protest ("Called to Ordure", Eye 1167, 15th-28th Sept 2006), I commend you on getting your report partly right.

However, there is one correction: the email from Jo Shuter was not "leaked". It was sent out as a statement to the Morning Star, and intended to be made public: the Star duly published it on Saturday 9 September.

Aside from that, I'd like to point out several police officers accosted several demonstration organisers and participants throughout the event and threatened "sanctions" related to public order offences. No sanctions were applied, but the anti-Blair teaching assistant to whom you refer has since been suspended by the school. His name is Robin Sivapalan, and messages of support can be sent to: robin@free-education.org.uk

Regards,
RICHARD SEYMOUR,

London.

Lookalike

Conservatives

HACIENDA DEL ALAMO
Golf Resort

Sir,

I couldn't help wondering whether the PR ad team who spent £20k on the new tree logo were also working creatively for Hacienda del Alamo Golf Resort?

P. FILLER.

The fog clears

Sir,

Nice as it is to get a mention, your suggestion that the MoD and NATO press offices didn't communicate on the weekend of the NIMROD crash in Afghanistan (Fog of War, Eye 1167) is wide of the mark.

I and my team in London spoke regularly to NATO colleagues both in Afghanistan and Brussels throughout that awful day. We both knew exactly what one another were doing in trying to keep a ravenous media informed whilst holding back information which would otherwise have narrowed the circle of grief until families had been informed.

The press office you might wish to point the finger at is elsewhere: it was the Taliban which announced it had shot down a helicopter, inspiring many an "expert" to rush straight to air to report that their "sources" were telling them a Chinook had come down.

Yours as per usual,
JAMES CLARK,

Director of News, Ministry of Defence.

Grass stains

Sir,

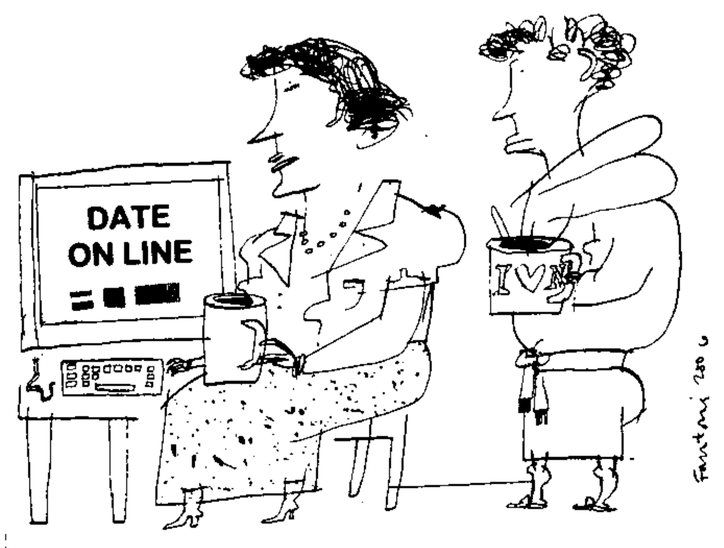
The Gunter Grass cartoon, printed by you, ever-so comfy, middle-class wankers. Q: What would you have done, at 16 or 17 yrs old, confronted by black leather-clad Gestapo/SS agents? a) shit your wee pants, b) cream your pants, c) one or the other or, actually, probably both. Have you read his books?!

Ext disappointed in you for following the, generally mindless, media.

C. COLLINS,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



"This one says... I am male, in my late fifties, overweight, unemployed and only interested in having sex"

Blooming silly

Sir,

It's wholly understandable that Emily Lane should have disliked the cartoon in Eye 1166 ("Accident Flowers"). However, her contention that "Each offering [of flowers] records pain and loss – to the living, of someone dear; to the dead, of everything" is simply not true; as witness the "Anfield Chicken Foetus" incident last year, in which someone found what appeared to be an aborted foetus in a Liverpool back street. Within days the site was awash with flowers, teddy bears and cards bearing messages such as: "RIP Little Baby, Safe in the arms of Jesus" – until the Merseyside Police announced that the remains were of poultry origin.

Yours faithfully,
VICTORIA SOLT DENNIS,

Gillingham, Kent.

Sir,

On Valentine's Day a couple of years ago I found as I left my house a fresh bouquet of flowers. Thinking they had been left at the wrong address I propped them against the lamp-post a few yards up the street. When I got back that afternoon it had been joined by four more bunches.

The local paper ran the story, with a photograph. This was followed by several irate letters, some accusing me of deliberately "planting" the flowers with a view to mocking the "genuine grief of others".

As if I'd have to.

LAURENCE INMAN,

Birmingham.

Transport of delight?

Sir,

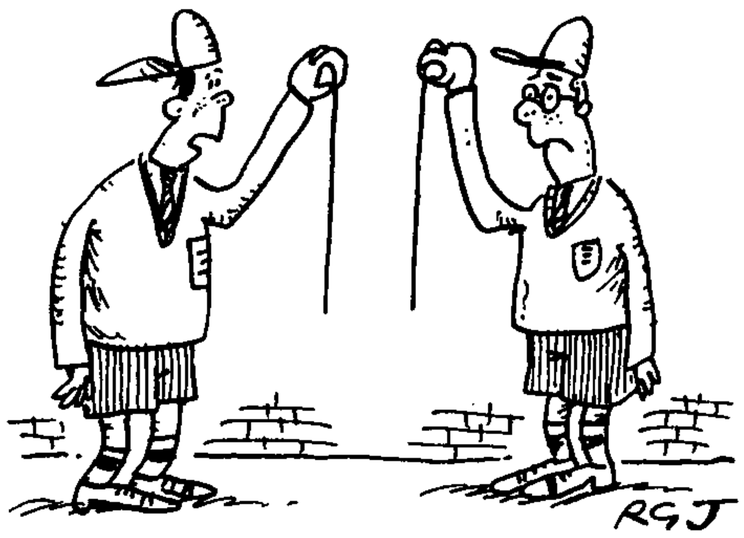
I was interested to hear that DHL has been awarded the, no doubt, lucrative contract to look after transport logistics for the NHS. I recently ordered return airline tickets for a flight from Southampton to Amsterdam using BMI. I was advised that they would be despatched the very next day by DHL at a cost to me of £5. Two weeks later I called BAA to try and locate my tickets. I was told that there was a delay in dispatch and that if I did not receive the tickets three weeks prior to departure that I should call them back. I was subsequently advised by a travelling companion that BMI had cancelled their winter schedule from Southampton and that I was entitled to a refund or rebooking. I opted for the refund.

I was bemused to receive this afternoon via DHL tickets for a flight that has not only been cancelled by the airline, but also by me and for which I have been refunded.

I hope to God that DHL don't get their hands on organs destined for transplant.

Yours faithfully,
JOSEPH DIXON,

Via email.



"Conkers just isn't the same since all the horse chestnut trees died of bleeding canker"

Notes & Queries

Sir,

Can I be the pedant's pedant and point out that the Planets by Holst with Colin Matthew's Pluto (Eye 1167) was commissioned and first performed by the Hallé Orchestra. The original recording was by the Hallé Orchestra, conducted by Mark Elder [2001 Hyperion CDA67270]

BARBARA OXLEY.

... Dudley Turner (Eye 1167) is quite right to assert that Henry Blofeld was not the former head of SMERSH; unfortunately he was also neither the head of SPECTRE.

That dubious honour went to the fictional Polish-Greek economist, political historian, engineer, radionics habitué and latterly iniquitous Ernst Stavro Blofeld.

In the original joke, there nevertheless lies a grain of reality: Bond creator Ian Fleming went to Eton with the father of cricket commentator Henry "Blowers" Blofeld, whose name was subsequently adopted for the aforementioned supervillain.

Oh, and the "C" in SPECTRE incidentally stands for "Counter-intelligence", not "Counter-espionage".

MIKE EMERY.

... I read with interest Lunchtime O'Boulez's article on the bandwidth reduction for Radio 3 (Issue1167). I do however have to correct a few issues.

Firstly, bandwidth is measured in kilobits per second, and not kilobites (sic).

Secondly, if bandwidth were measured in kilobites (sic) it would be spelt kilobytes.

Finally the abbreviation of kilobits per second is kbps. Had it been bytes it would be kBps.

I find it shocking that these mistakes were made, and I would cancel my subscription, but as it was bought for me for a present, I can't, so I guess I won't.

To solve the Radio 3 issue, couldn't the Beeb take the necessary bandwidth from Radio 1? I'm sure no one would notice the loss of quality.

JOHN GREENWOOD.

Devil of a problem

Sir,

In response to the letter from Simon Lawson about "child witches" and the belief that people can be "possessed", it is important to note that this idea does not only come from Africa. A few years ago I was acting as a "locum" Anglican priest in New Zealand and found myself presiding at a number of services where the same beliefs were used to denigrate and ostracise members of the community, sometimes driving them to near suicide. In this country it is not unusual for evangelical charismatic churches, of both the Church of England and independent churches, to see people's problems as being due to an evil spirit or the devil being in them.

REV BOB SIMMONDS,

Broadstairs.

Beefing about cows

Sir,

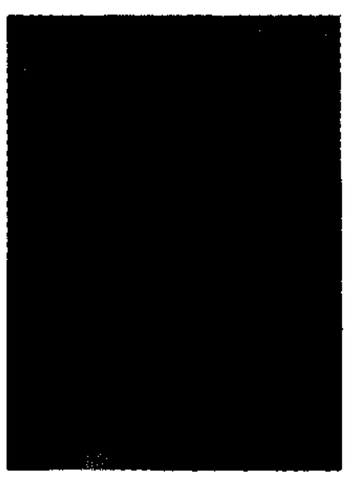
Muckspreader mocks the Labour government of New Zealand for proposing a "flatulence tax" on livestock because this will not "persuade the animals to hold back their wind". No, of course it won't, but this isn't politically correct madness. The cost of the tax will presumably be passed on to the consumer. If beef becomes more expensive then people will buy less of it and (unsubsidised) farmers will have to cut the size of their herds. If there are fewer cows, there will be fewer cow farts, and less global warming. At the same time, the tax revenue raised on the beef that is sold can be used to solve social problems including (but not necessarily limited to) the effects of climate change.

Beef is cheaper than it ought to be because the price we pay at the till does not include the cost imposed on us all by methane emissions. It's time for us to grow up and get used to the idea that if we want to do things that hurt everybody through environmental damage, whether butter from, or a budget flight to, Co Kerry, then we really ought to pay back into the commonweal for the privilege. No such thing as a free lunch, even on Sunday.

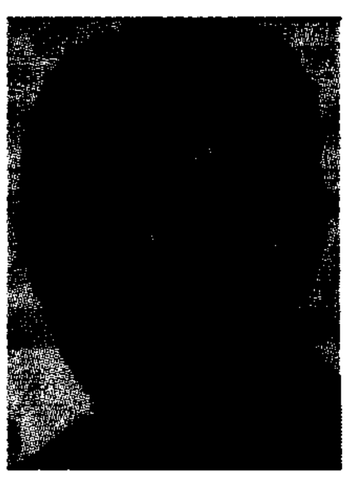
Yours,
CONRAD VINK,

Via email.

Lookalike



Brown



Newley

Sir,

Please find attached two photographs from today's papers (8/9/06). One is a picture of a performer who considered himself the ultimate all-rounder, but felt he never got the recognition he deserved.

And the other is Anthony Newley.

Yours etc,
DAVE TROTT,

London NW3.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Is that relevant or are we just barking up a red herring kind of tree?"
VICTORIA DERBYSHIRE, Radio 5 Live
(Peter Smith)

"It's hard to pin your finger on what went wrong."
Commentator, 2BR Radio
(Anthony P. Mullen)

"He [Jose Mourinho] pulls up his trousers as if to say 'a job well done'..."
Commentator, BBC1
(Sergio Ung)

"Over one hundred endangered species are in danger."
AASMAH MIR, Radio 5 Live
(David Uden)

"That's the first time I've seen a Haslam on a black Ducati since his father Ron rode a black Norton."
BARRY NUTLEY, ITV
(Nigel Newman)

SOLUTIONS

"Mulmar beverage solutions" – *coffee machines*

"Navigator Office Paper Solutions" – *paper*

"EnerSys Inc is the world leader in stored energy solutions" – *batteries*

"Sliding Sash Solutions" – *window repairs*

"Vinten camera support solutions" – *tripods*

"Sharing Knowledge: A Defra Solution" – *government leaflet aimed at "improving collaborative working across the Defra family in order to improve the customer experience"*

All submitted by readers

Comics stripped

Sir,

The 9-11 Sandwich Tribute (Eye 1167)

"A new easily digestible way to remember the world's greatest tragedy told in a simple patronising format that they think the American people will be able to understand."

It is both inaccurate and lazy to assume that the comic strip format automatically makes the message "simple patronising". "Maus" is a comic strip. "Maus" is about a Polish Jew in the Holocaust. Simple format, horrifying message.

Are the comic strips in Private Eye only there because there were no complicated uncondescending words to fill the space, or because sometimes words and pictures combined in sequence carry more of a message than words or pictures alone?

ANDREW BAILEY,

Via email.

Photo opportunity

Sir,

Whilst on a recent holiday I was strolling down one of the many beaches of Saint Tropez when I saw the not so unusual sight of a mature portly gentleman guiding a lovely young lady across the sands. As we crossed paths I recognised the familiar voice of an ageing broadcaster. Indeed I heard him remark that he found the sand most difficult to walk across; hence, I assume his need for the young lady's hand for balance.

As the dark nights draw in and the cool air of autumn makes me reach for my overcoat, I was wondering whether you would be so kind to print any pictures that you might have on your files which might remind me of a fine summer's day on the beaches of Saint Tropez?

JAMIE POWELL,

Via email.

Letter from **Abuja**

from Our Own Correspondent

A LEADER at war with his estranged deputy, a ruling party mired in sleaze and mediocrity and an electorate profoundly cynical after nearly a decade of empty promises? Yes, we too are ruled by a man obliged more to God than the mere mortals who voted for him.

Olusegun Obasanjo, born-again Christian and recycled military ruler, is president of Nigeria and a man driven by two passions: Ugandan discussions and a visceral hatred of his deputy, Atiku Abubakar.

Atiku tried to get Obasanjo impeached in 2002 and helped thwart the president's bid earlier this year to change the constitution to stay in power. Atiku wants to be president after elections in 2007. Obasanjo has vowed to stop him. The two are presently trading accusations as to who is the most corrupt.

There is no monopoly of corruption in our executive. Established only two years ago, our FBI-style Economic and Financial Crimes Commission has torn through our toxic political elite like a whirlwind. Its tall, bespectacled chairman Nuhu Ribadu already has the scalps of the chief of police, the president of the Senate, a clutch of cabinet ministers, a state governor, the head of the drug law enforcement agency and one of our most well-connected businessmen.

Ribadu says there are 200 more people he wants to arrest in connection with the institutionalised theft and casual incompetence our rulers believe to be their cultural right. He also wants to vet all those planning to stand for office in 2007 – bad news for most of the dozens of presidential aspirants.

They include former military ruler Ibrahim Babangida, as rich as Croesus after his own chaotic tenure 20 years ago, and, from the younger generation, Peter Odili, governor of Rivers state in the impoverished, violence-strewn Niger Delta, where most of our oil is found. Odili, who has acquired on behalf of his people two executive jets, this year awarded himself a travel allowance of $60,000 a day.

Since 1960 we have stumbled from crisis to catastrophe. A tiny clique enjoys fabulous wealth, while millions scramble for scraps. Regular electricity and water supplies are forgotten memories. Armed robbery and worse are a daily threat to rich and poor alike. This month the army high command was decimated in a plane crash. The next day we held an aviation safety conference… but many delegates couldn't make it. In a country that produces two million barrels of oil a day, there was a fuel shortage. A former top security official is not alone in saying the system is too rotten to be reformed: "The best thing that could happen now," he says, "would be a bloody coup in which the soldiers start by rounding up and executing the cream of our political and business class."

For the time being we supply 10 percent of America's oil and a big slice of Shell's profits. But Nigerians are also at the centre of human trafficking, drug smuggling and money laundering. The fault for this state of affairs is ours, but we have been helped by our friends. Who buys the oil that is stolen by a mafia that includes government officials, senior military officers and self-appointed militant groups? It ends up in refineries in the developed world. If the US parked a satellite overhead, we would be able to stifle the flow of money that fuels our violence.

Britain meanwhile shovels aid money into a series of projects that range from the pointless to the damaging. And Tony Blair seems to see a kindred spirit in Obasanjo. He did nothing when the president's supporters tried to help him stay on in office forever. And when there was evidence that British banks and auditors were cleaning up tens of millions of pounds for an apparently deeply corrupt, cross-dressing state governor arrested in London last year, the silence was equally deafening.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "I decided I was going to become a perfect person by fasting," Jim Nelson told North Vancouver Provincial Court, "so I walked into the forest outside Whistler Village and erected my tent. I'd fasted before for thirty days, but this time I decided to fast for sixty, to become extra-specially perfect. I was alright until the freezing night of December 19th, when I experienced such intense hunger and extreme cold that I must have entered a cloud of insanity. In a state of total confusion, I walked into the village, threw a rock through the window of an unoccupied condo near the Jack Nicklaus North golf course, climbed in, raided the fridge and cupboards, and ate and ate until I became unconscious. I know it was wrong, but it wasn't my fault. My inner animal had gained control of me."

Before passing judgement, Provincial Court Judge Douglas Moss described Nelson's tale as "bizarre to say the least. Once inside the condo, you behaved disgracefully. You pulled all kinds of food out of the cupboards. You ate an entire raw chicken, ripped open Christmas presents in search of chocolates, and stuffed yourself with two family-sized blueberry pies, then passed out. When the homeowner entered her house, she was horrified to find a man lying unconscious in her kitchen, surrounded by wrapping paper, with vomit and faeces located all about him.

"However, there is an unwritten lore in the North that allows a traveller caught in a blizzard to break into a cabin for food and warmth, to keep body and soul together. Furthermore, from the photographs that were taken of you by the police at the time, it is clear you had little connection to reality on that night. So although I consider your quest for spiritual perfection to be half-baked and ill-founded in logic, I find your mind was so dysfunctional that your evidence has an air of reality to it. I therefore acquit you of all charges." *(Vancouver Sun, 30/8/06. Spotter: Richard Baldry)*

– ● –

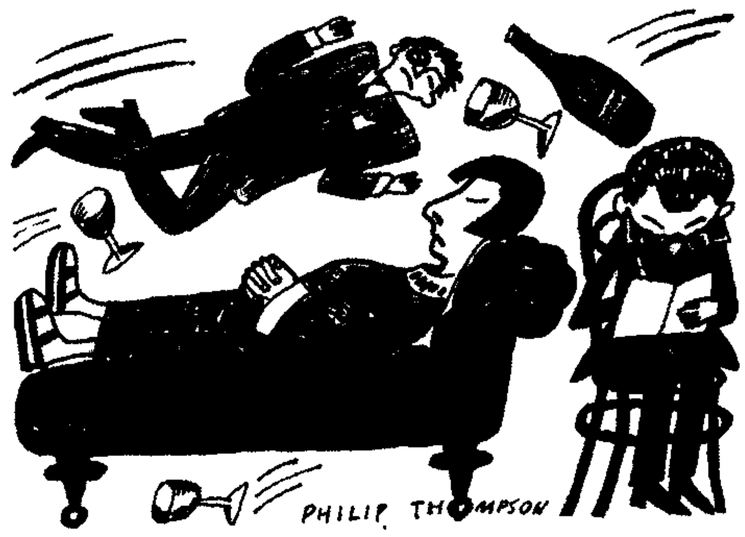
● *"Mario Visnjic called me on his mobile phone, and asked me for help," a member of the beach staff in Valalta, Croatia, told reporters. "He wouldn't tell me over the phone what the matter was, but when I found him sitting on his deckchair, his problem was obvious. He'd gone swimming naked in the cool sea, and had then sat down on his wooden chair to relax. Because his testicles had shrunk with the cold, they'd slipped easily through the wooden slats, but as he relaxed in the sun, they'd expanded back to normal size, and he'd become stuck.*

"We tried everything. We coated his scrotum in coconut oil, and poured ice-cold water on his testicles. But they wouldn't shrink, and we couldn't pull them back up between the slats. In the end, we had to saw the entire deckchair in half to release him, and by then he'd attracted quite a crowd of onlookers." (Liberty Post, 2/8/06. Spotter: Brian Basham)

– ● –

● "The Rising Sun Anger Release Bar is a new concept in Chinese nightlife," Wu Gong told reporters in Nanjing, "because it offers an outlet from the stresses and strains of modern life. As well as having a drink here, you can smash up our staff, break glasses, shout and scream, and generally throw things around to release tension. And if that doesn't work, we also have trained psychologists on hand to offer counselling.

"We employ twenty well-built male models, all in their 20s and 30s, who are available to be smashed up. Customers can specify how they want the models to dress, and are then free to



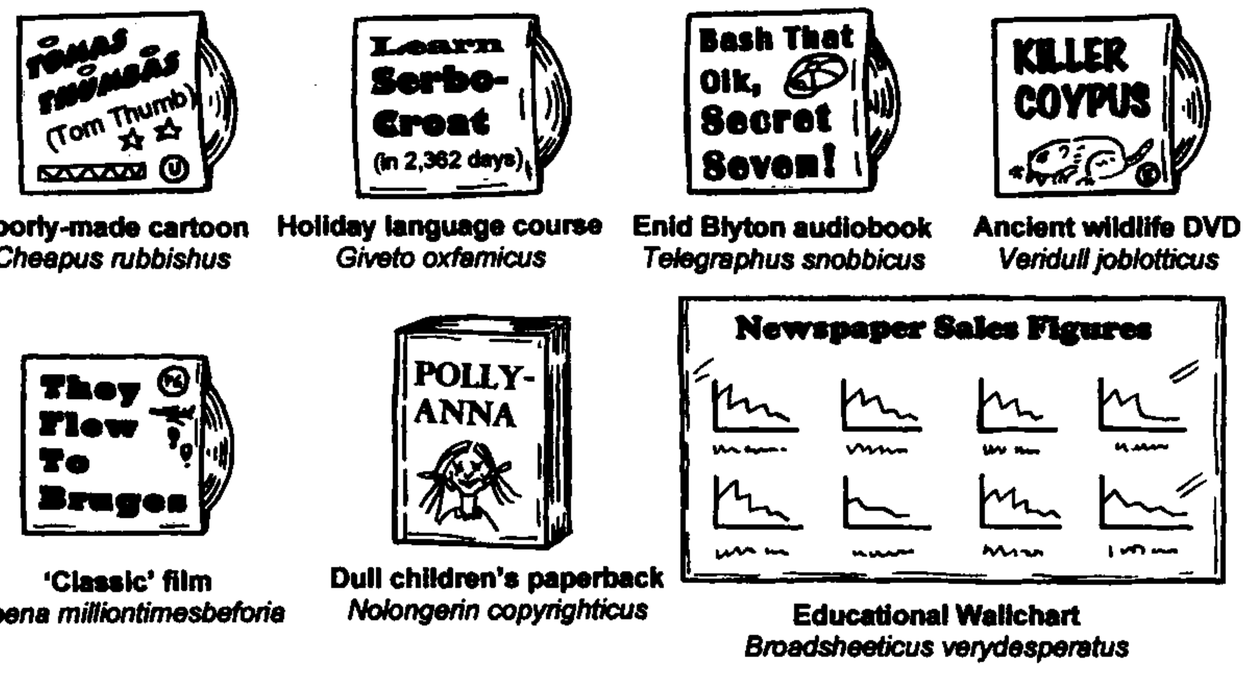
give them a sound beating, smashing them up however they wish. At present, almost all our customers are women, especially those who work in service and entertainment companies. I tell the women that violence will not solve their problems, and that really they really need to adjust their lifestyles, but they are happy to pay up to 300 yuan a time to smash the men up, so I am happy to provide them with the service."

Customer Chow Liang added that, "Pressure in today's society comes from everywhere, from family, from work, from your boss or your boyfriend. We get no place to vent our anger. So the idea of beating someone dressed as your boss seems very attractive." *(China Daily, 7/8/06. Spotter: Anon)*

a apparently BY MIKE BARFIELD

A FREE WALLCHART FOR ALL READERS!

Great British Newspaper Giveaways



Poorly-made cartoon *Cheapus rubbishus*

Holiday language course *Giveto oxfamicus*

Enid Blyton audiobook *Telegraphus snobbicus*

Ancient wildlife DVD *Veridull joblotticus*

'Classic' film *Seena milliontimesbeforie*

Dull children's paperback *Nolongerin copyrighticus*

Educational Wallchart *Broadsheeticus verydesperatus*

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

A full report of the Parish Outing to Manchester will appear in the next issue (except for Mr Brown's speech, which there won't be room for)

Hullo!

And, as I said to you at this week's outing: "Let's look forwards, not backwards".

Now that we've sorted out all that silly nonsense about whether or not I will be stepping down as your vicar sometime in the next year, or whatever, we can get back to our real business.

I don't want to dwell on all my past achievements because it would take far too long and fill hundreds of newsletters! Sufficient to say that no one could ever do so much again and it would be a great shame if whoever takes over from me (and I'm not going to say who that will be!) messes everything up! So, to prevent that happening, we are going to have a "great debate" about where we're going, when we're going and who we are going with.

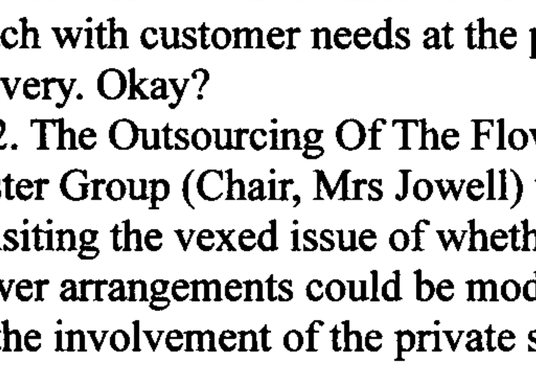
That's why I've set up five ad hoc home working groups to plan the way ahead for the parish over the next 20 years.

Their task will be to draw up detailed templates for every aspect of parish policy:

1. The Reconfiguration Group (Chair, Mrs Hewitt) will be looking at ways of reconfiguring the cottage hospital to maximise efficiency and to reprioritise resource allocation to ensure a better match with customer needs at the point of delivery. Okay?

2. The Outsourcing Of The Flower Roster Group (Chair, Mrs Jowell) will be revisiting the vexed issue of whether our flower arrangements could be modernised by the involvement of the private sector on a case-by-case, fee-paying basis (ie, Bloomforce plc, the German-owned floral multi-national).

3. The Sustainable Excellence In Education Group (Chair, Mr Johnson) will be mapping out a timetable for further streamlining of our many initiatives in



The Vicar summons his chosen disciples and instructs them to carry his message to all unbelievers... As seen by our local artist Mr de la Nougerede

ensuring that we can meet all our targets in the Primark Business Studies And Tourism Academy (formerly St Albion's Primary School).

4. The Overseas Missions Group (Chair, Mrs Beckett) will be reviewing our parish's approach to all areas of interglobal conflict, working in close conjunction with our friend the Rev. Dubya Bush of the Church of the Latter-Day Morons whose knowledge of all things "overseas" is second to none!

5. Perhaps the most important of all the six writing groups is one I shall chair myself, the Legacy Group, which will lay down detailed plans for every area covered by the other groups to ensure that, in the unlikely event of my no longer "being around", my successor will know exactly what to do and will not be able to "muck things up", which he might well do if he was allowed a free rein! (No offence, Gordon, so don't cry! We know how sensitive you are!)

To sum up – what my "Great Debate" is about is to give everyone in the parish a chance to listen to what I've got to say, and to agree with it!

So let the dialogue begin!

Yours ever,

Tony

Parish Postbag

Dear Sir,

It suddenly struck me as I was in my caravan on the road to Damascus that Gordon Brown has been a supremely brilliant Treasurer and when it comes to choosing the Vicar's successor he would be easily the

Yours sincerely,
Mrs Margaret Beckett,
The Old Campsite,
Pontin's Lane.

■ The Editor regrets that for reasons of space some letters may have to be cut.

To Remember In Your Prayers

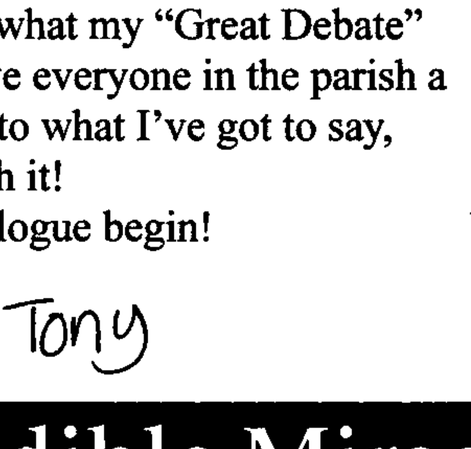
● Mrs Short, who has yet again embarrassed herself and everyone else by making uncalled-for remarks about the Vicar. We all, of course, sympathise with Mrs Short's problems as a lonely, middle-aged woman who has become increasingly embittered, finding solace only in the bottle (and the arms of the late Mrs Mowlam's husband – you would have thought he might have learned his lesson!). But let us pray that she may not suffer all these afflictions for too long, and may soon enjoy a speedy release from all the tribulations of this imperfect world (which we all know she was far too perfect for anyway!). T.B.

Incredible Miracles In The Parish

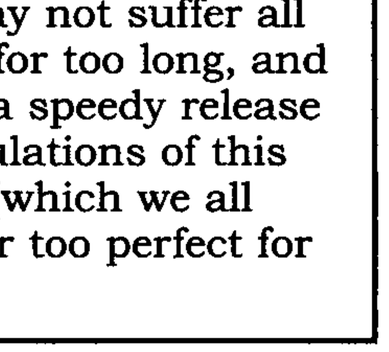
This week, large crowds have gathered to witness not one but two miracles in the parish...

† *The Holy Sign Of Dubya*

Parishioners have been astonished to see in recent days the letter "W" mysteriously appearing on the Vicar's forehead. Said one, "It's just as if the Rev. Dubya had come down from on high to brand the Vicar as if he was one of his cattle. It signifies to the world that he has been marked out as one of the Rev. Dubya's 'chosen ones'."



† *The Weeping Gordon*



Parishioners have been even more astonished by the sudden appearance of tears streaming down the notoriously stony face of Mr Brown. Many have been deeply moved by this unprecedented sight and have claimed that it makes Mr Brown "almost human". But cynics have poo-poohed this, claiming that the miracle is only a trick, worked from behind the scenes by the use of an onion which is brought out whenever cameras appear.

GLENDA SLAGG

THE GAL WITH THE HOT FLUSH!!

■ **HATS OFF to Zac Goldsmith!?! He's the fun-loving philanderer who's proved to be a chip off the old block!??! OK, Zac was snapped leaving a lady friend's love nest and told everyone he was discussing poker. Poker? I bet you did, Zac!!?! And good luck to you – your randy old dad would have been proud of you a-gamblin' and a-gambollin' the night away!!?! Geddit?!?**

■ ZAC GOLDSMITH?!?!? What a lousy love rat!?!! You're meant to be the Tory's Mr Green, Zac – but I bet you've got a red face this morning!?! Global warming? It's certainly going to be hot when you face your missus!?! Face it, Zac – you're even worse than your dad when it comes to the braggin' and the shaggin'!?! Poker?!? Of course you did!?! Deal me out, Mister – and let's hope your lovely wife Sheherazade gives you the Zac!!?! And pronto!?! Geddit??!?

■ **CORONATION Street!?! Copulation Street, more like!?! What exactly are Jenny and Rupert and Bradley and Debra up to? Who cares?!? as long as they are happy, what's it got to do with us?!?? *(You're fired. Ed.)***

■ HERE THEY are – Glenda's Conference Cuties!?!

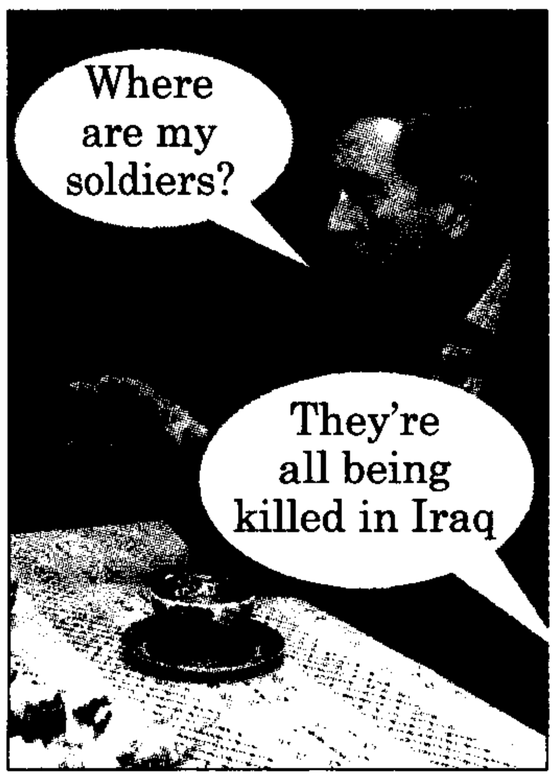
● **Alan Johnson!!?!** OK, I've never heard of you and I don't know what you look like, but I don't half fancy you, Mister!!?!

● **Ed Balls?!??** Mmmm!?! Say no more!!? Geddit?!!?

● **David Miliband!!?!** Not very crazy name, extremely dull guy!!?!

Byeeee!!!

CHARLES IN BOILED EGG DRAMA



"I warned them a budget airline would lower the tone"

DAILY EXPRESS
THE WORLD'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 2006

DUKE BLAMED FOR HAMMOND CRASH SHOCK

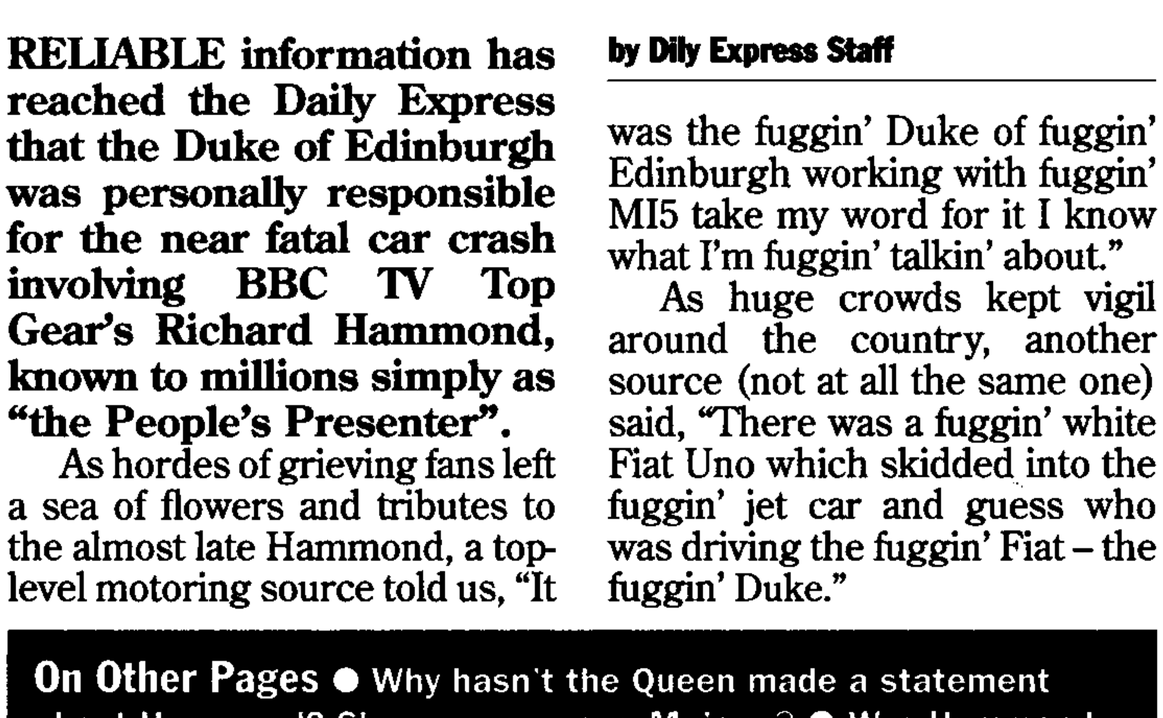
RELIABLE information has reached the Daily Express that the Duke of Edinburgh was personally responsible for the near fatal car crash involving BBC TV Top Gear's Richard Hammond, known to millions simply as "the People's Presenter".

by Dily Express Staff

As hordes of grieving fans left a sea of flowers and tributes to the almost late Hammond, a top-level motoring source told us, "It was the fuggin' Duke of fuggin' Edinburgh working with fuggin' MI5 take my word for it I know what I'm fuggin' talkin' about."

As huge crowds kept vigil around the country, another source (not at all the same one) said, "There was a fuggin' white Fiat Uno which skidded into the fuggin' jet car and guess who was driving the fuggin' Fiat – the fuggin' Duke."

On Other Pages ● Why hasn't the Queen made a statement about Hammond? Show us you care, Ma'am 3 ● Was Hammond pregnant? Shock new claim 4 ● Memorial fountain to be built and then closed immediately because it doesn't work 94



"It's spooky really, he's always here waiting. It's almost like he knows I'm coming before I arrive!"

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Sir Malcolm Arnold,
famous composer

So. Farewell
Then Sir Malcolm
Arnold.

Famous composer
Of film and TV
Themes.

You won an
Oscar for
Bridge On The
River Kwai.

All together now –
Da da
Da da da
Dum-dum
Da
(Repeat).

Also farewell
Then
Chuck Rio
Saxophonist
And composer
Of *Tequila!*

Yes,
You were the man
Who shouted
"Tequila!"

All together now –
"Tequila!"

E.J. Thribb (17½)

WHITE MODEL BLACKS UP FOR LIBERAL NEWSPAPER

© The IndescribablySilly Newspaper 2006

POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

Office hours: 9-12 Mon-Tues (except Tuesday)

25 September 2006

0743 hrs Emergency call received from Mrs Violet Prunehat, an elderly resident of Kinnock Close, alleging that she had become the victim of a serious assault by persons unknown, though believed to be the two minors from next door who were allegedly in the process of stealing her savings. Caller was informed that we were unable to assist her due to all officers being redeployed to the local St Gandalf's CofE primary school for 'Operation Broadsword', checking that parents have complied with new regulations regarding the requirement for booster seats in all cars for young persons below the height of 3.7 metres (24° Celsius). A number of mothers attempted to resist arrest and were detained in police custody pending their deaths. 14 children were taken into care by WPC Mordern and transferred to the supervision of Mr P.D.O. File of Neasden Social Services.

0921 hrs Return to breakfast in canteen, where officers unfortunately had to arrest themselves for ordering a "Full English", in direct contravention of the Celtic Minority (Non-Discriminatory Breakfast Provision) Regulations 2006. Officers then released themselves on bail, pending a full enquiry by Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss.

1115 hrs The relatives of Mrs Prunehat ring the station to inform us that Mrs Prunehat is now deceased. Duty Sergeant 'Chalk' Farm thanked them for their co-operation in providing the information, and noted in the log that a police presence was now no longer required, due to her decision to exercise her human right to be murdered by her neighbours.

1431 hrs A special canteen lunch to celebrate the promotion of our former Firearms Officer, now Assistant Deputy Commissioner Cressida Dick, who has been rewarded for her successful handling of the death of the innocent Brazilian terror suspect J-C Menezes by her new appointment as Deputy Chief Commissioner.

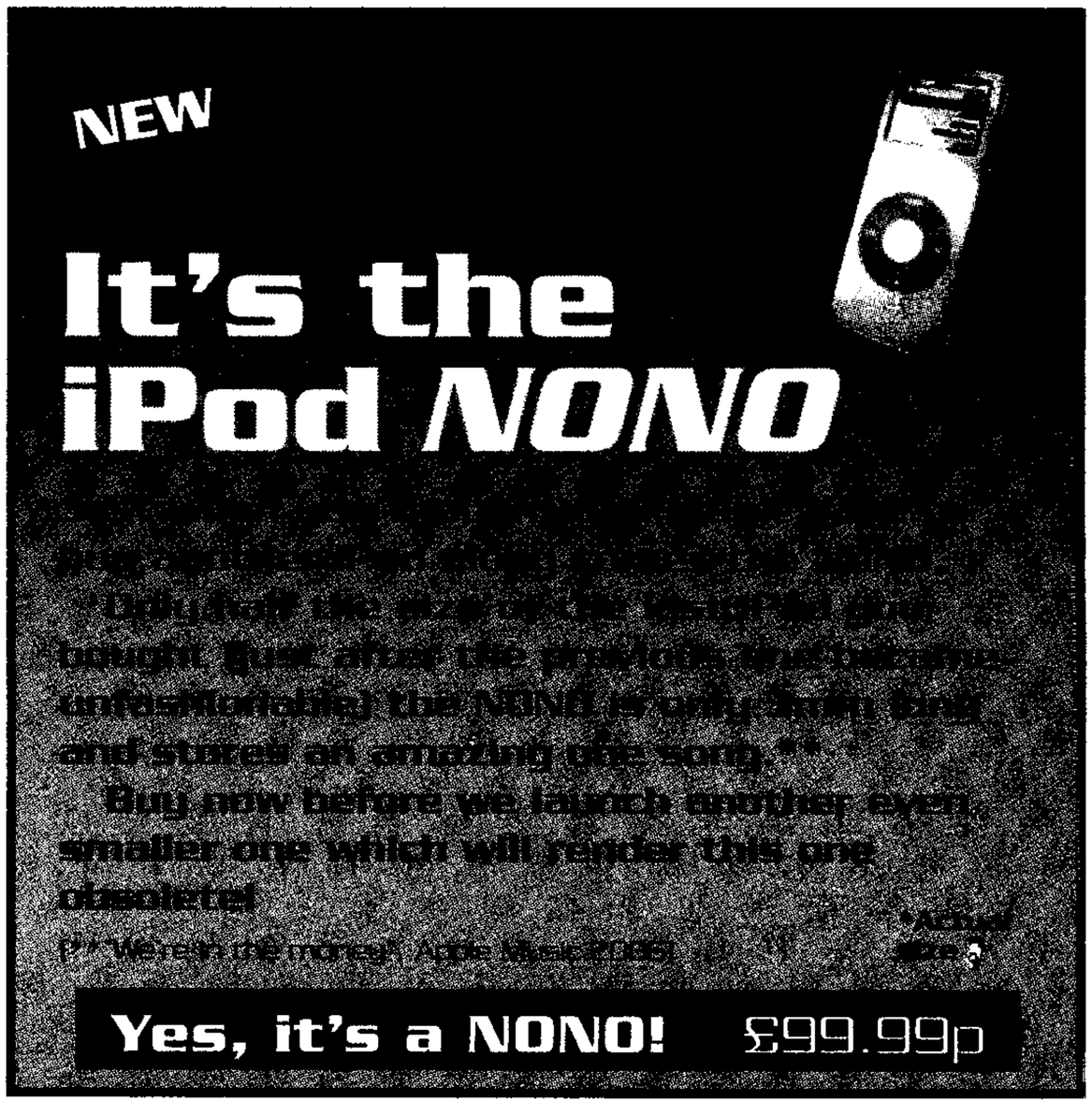
The meal was interrupted at the Afro-Caribbean Forest Gateau stage when a full red alert was sounded following a complaint by a member of the public that the Prime Minister's wife was attempting to murder a small boy.

Sixty fully-armed officers were directed to the crime scene, where they discovered a Mrs Cherie Booth laughing and talking to a 16-year-old youth. Under interrogation, both witnesses eventually confessed that no assault had occurred, and that the alleged incident had consisted of no more than the boy raising his fingers in imitation of a rabbit's ears behind Mrs Blair's head, followed by her directing at him a harmless cuff which did not result in injury, and which did not meet the definition of a "serious sexual assault or rape" within the meaning of the relevant legislation. Both parties were cautioned for wasting police time and disturbing an important police lunch.

1656 hrs A member of the public entered the station in a state of distress, to report that he had just observed a small demonstration involving several thousand Muslims outside the local Roman Catholic church of St Belloc's. The informant claimed that the faith protestors were carrying placards calling for the assassination of the Pope and the incineration of all infidels. The duty officer, PC Whitechapel, arrested the informant, Sister Agnes, and charged her with an Islamophobic hate-crime under the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2006.

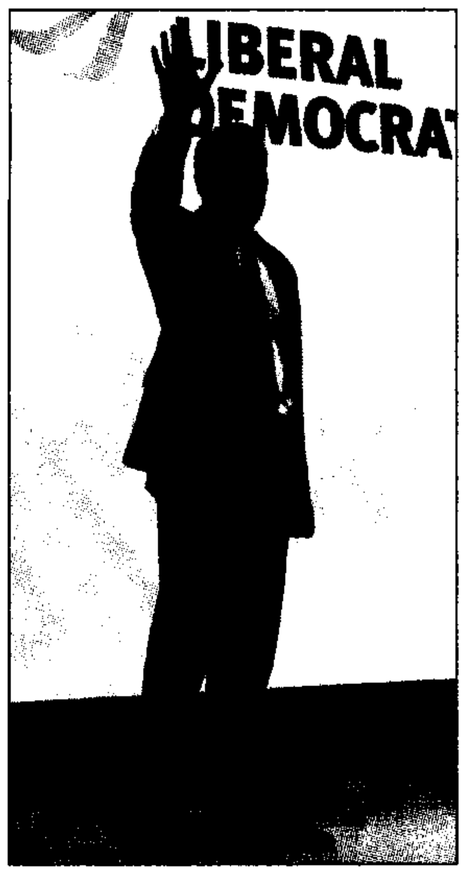
"It was his last wish"

Advertisement



WORLD OF FASHION

IS THIS MODEL TOO THIN?

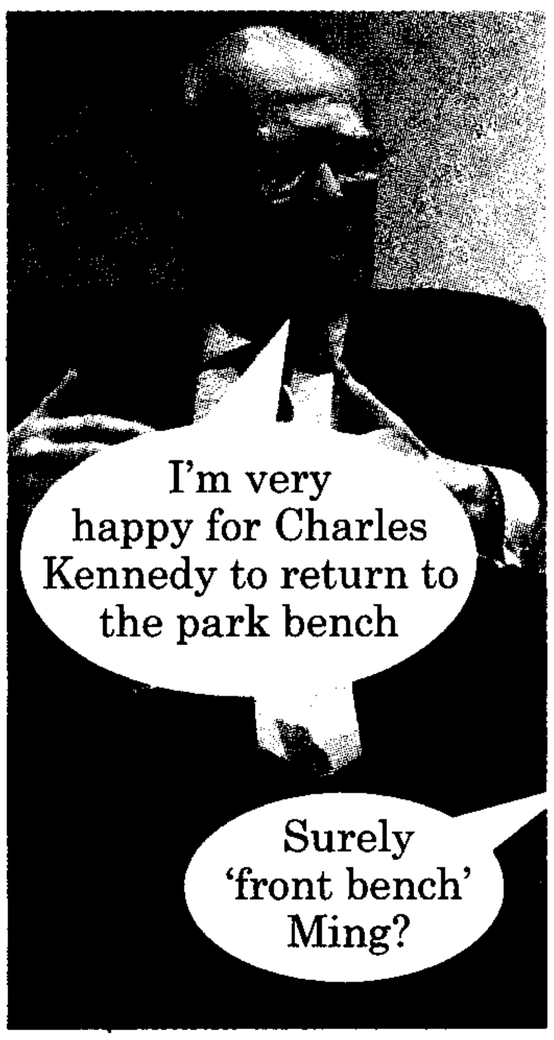


LIGHTWEIGHT politicians like Charles Kennedy should be barred from the platform. That was the view of top fashion expert Sir Ming Campbell, as the row over stick-like politicians threatened to dominate the Lib Dem conference.

"Kennedy is a very bad model for young people," said Sir Ming. "People want someone with a bit more weight, someone who is more rounded – someone who looks like myself."

Fat Cat Walk

But the waif-like Kennedy defended himself, saying, "Ming is pretty thin himself. But that is what the public want. Nobody is interested in looking at heavyweight figures lumbering across the platform. The trend now is for Lib Dem politicians to be of no substance at all."



Liberal Democrats Radical Tax Transformation in Full

OUT GOES

An unpopular policy which alienated middle class voters and was easy for rival parties to attack.

IN COMES

An unpopular policy which alienates middle class voters and is easy for rival parties to attack.

TORIES 'HAVEN'T ABANDONED TRADITIONAL VALUES'

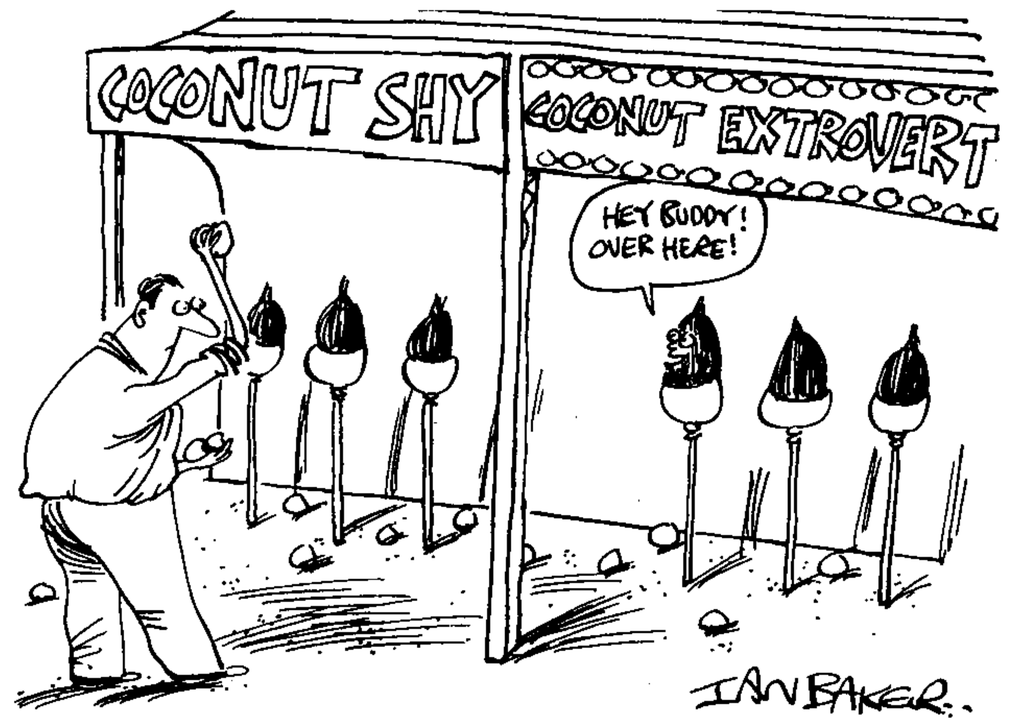
by Our Political Staff **Peter O'Bore**

IN A bid to reassure grass roots supporters that the Conservative Party is still holding true to its historic principles, Central Office directed reporters to the story of James Gray MP.

Same Old Tory

"At a time when we are being accused of becoming sensitive, caring and touchy-feely," said a spokesman, "here is a good old-fashioned Conservative MP who is not afraid to dump his cancer-suffering wife and run off with another married woman.

"We salute the North Wiltshire love-rat MP and we hope this reassures all those who fear that the new-look Tory Party is going to change irrevocably."



Exclusive to Private Eye

Her Majesty The Queen On Meeting Jeremy Paxman

IT IS with a feeling of some dread that one approaches the iconic figure of Jeremy Paxman who has for so many years held a unique position in our national life.

We are not naturally an admirer of the institution of Newsnight, with its overpaid courtiers and its code of deference towards Mr Paxman, but undoubtedly, for millions of people, Paxman is a symbol of hope and comfort, standing above politics as he does, offering from his palatial office in White City an impartial, wise perspective on the affairs of this country.

Paxman has seen Prime Ministers come and go and has proved that he has an immense amount of experience to offer.

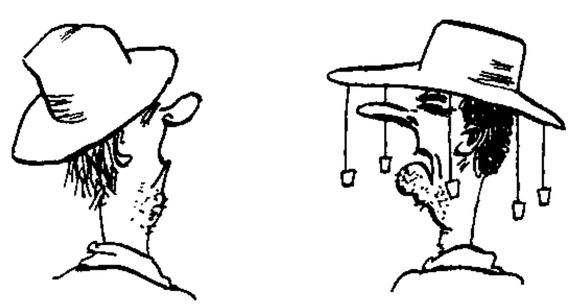
However, actually seeing him in the flesh was a nerve-racking experience even for a cynical old monarch like ourselves.

He is taller than he appears on television and much more friendly than you would think.

He said to me, "It is an enormous pleasure to meet you, your Royal Ma'amship," and laughed uproariously when I sneered at him and said "Come off it!".

After spending some time with him, we have had to change our opinion somewhat and concede that Jeremy Paxman is a good thing for Britain. And the alternative is surely unthinkable. Kirsty Wark? We think not.

© Abridged extract from "Vivat Paxman!" by Queen Elizabeth II.



Flying no-nonsense doctor

PRIVATE EYE WORLD EXCLUSIVE

TOP MANAGER 'TOOK BUNGS'

Tape Shocker Lifts Lid On 'Biggest Ever Corruption Scandal'

by Our Football Staff **Phil Suitcase**

ASTONISHING new undercover evidence has been produced by Eye investigators to show conclusively that the "bent money-trail" goes all the way to the top.

Posing as a would-be peer, an Eye reporter arranged a rendezvous at a top London hotel with a shadowy go-between who described himself only as "Lord Levy".

But it turned out that Levy, who also posed as a part-time Middle East peacemaker, was acting as intermediary for the real "Mr Big", England supremo Tony Blair.

Pay it again Sam

This is the extraordinary transcript of the conversation that took place in Room 2004 of the Gatwick International Travelodge.

Reporter: I gather that you've done deals with Tony before?

Levy: You could say that. You want the title, and we may be able to help you, if there's something in it for Tony.

Reporter: What sort of sum are we looking at?

Levy: Well, it's got to be something that would make it worth his while!

Reporter: How about six figures?

Levy: Might get you a foot in the door of a knighthood, but nothing more. If you want a big one, it'll have to be a mill. Possibly more.

Reporter: Does that have to be cash down, or can we think in terms of a loan?

Levy: We'll call it a loan, but you won't see it back! Know what I mean? *(laughs)*.

Reporter: Does it help if we can do something for the family? I know his Missus likes a bit of the high-life. Free holidays, shopping trips, tickets for Cliff Richard concerts...

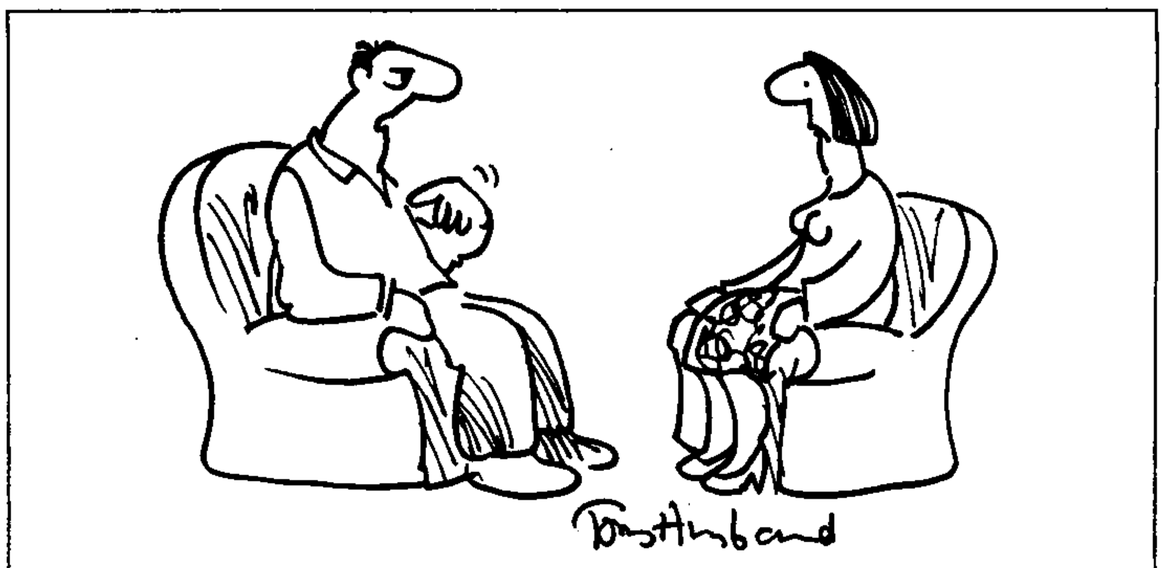
Levy: Ha, ha, ha! Of course, this meeting never took place! Know what I mean? Otherwise everything we've said here could end up in Private Eye, and we certainly don't want that do we?

When the above transcript was presented to Lord Levy, his solicitors replied by issuing the following statement.

"Lord Levy was talking himself up to make himself look big. In fact he barely knows Mr Blair and has no influence with him at all. Also everything in the above transcript was taken out of context."

On other pages

Whatever happened to the "beautiful game of politics"? asks everybody.



"I'll say whether I'm a control freak or not!"

Those Panorama Revelations About Football Corruption Which Will Rock the Game to its Core

THE culture of bungs is so endemic in the Premier League that these bungs are handed out on an almost daily basis.

But in a year of undercover filming we couldn't actually get any footage of any manager actually taking one of these bungs that are so endemic in the game they happen on an almost daily basis.

Though we almost did, kind of... we had a bloke sitting in a hotel room with a suitcase of cash, it was very exciting... like a movie... but the manager didn't turn up...

...As he was probably accepting another bung from someone else... have we mentioned that it's endemic in the game?

...Apparently it happens on a daily basis.

Umm... did we mention Sam Allardyce?

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Raymond Baxter, Legendary BBC Presenter

So. Farewell
Then Raymond
Baxter.

Famous for presenting
Tomorrow's World.

But now, we trust,
You are in Tomorrow's
Next World.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

● A podcast of this poem, read by Stephen Fry, may be downloaded from www.telegraphonskids.co.uk

"Mummy and Daddy have arranged some quality boredom for you"

FOOTBALL CORRUPT SHOCK

Amazing Allegations

On other pages

● Pope Catholic 12
● Bears Defecate In Sylvan Setting, etc 19

the PREMIERSH*TS

ABOUT THESE BUNG ALLEGATIONS, YOU MUST BE WORRIED?
ALLARDYCE
WORRIED? OF COURSE NOT...
WOULD YOU BE WORRIED ABOUT BEING INVESTIGATED BY THE F.A.?
ARE WE STILL PAYING SVEN?
F.A.
BUNG SHOCK
IS WEMBLEY BUILT YET?
IS THIS THE CHAP WE CONSIDERED FOR ENGLAND MANAGER?

THAT ALL-PURPOSE HEALTH SCARE PIECE IN FULL

YES, today's teenagers are becoming dangerously fat/thin.

Thanks to the pressures of modern life, health chiefs fear an epidemic of obesity/anorexia which will see our youngsters falling victim to a fatal desire to eat too much/too little.

If we don't do something now to make kids eat more/less, we are storing up a terrible crisis for ourselves in the very near future.

Our message to Britain's youth is simple. Keep/stop eating for God's sake.

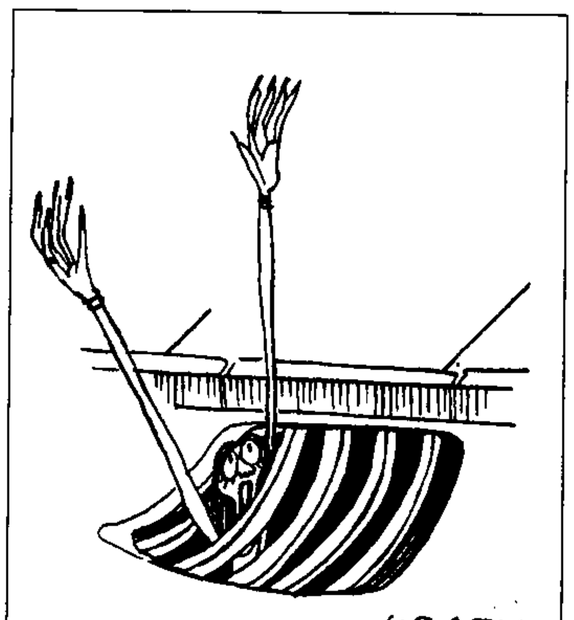
© All newspapers

DICTIONARY OF PHRASE AND FABLE

"Watching Postman Pat"

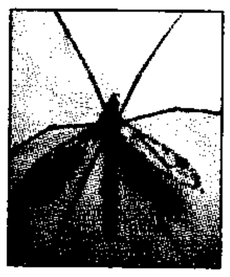
Plotting to depose unpopular leader – e.g. "Brutus and Cassius met up before the assassination of Caesar but told friends that they were watching Postman Pat with their children."

(Encyclopaedia of the Classical World, Watson & Brown 2006)



Model falls down drain

LEAVE DADDY-LONG-LEGS ALONE!



Says award-winning columnist MAX HASTINGS

EVERYWHERE I go, I'm hearing people complaining about a plague of junk mail. *(That was last week, Ed.)*

I mean, of course, daddy-long-legs. But what harm have these delightful creatures, with their gossamer wings and spindly elongated legs, ever done to anyone?

And what could be more charming on a warm September evening than to sit round the table with one's children, while these friendly visitors flit gaily round the room like so many elegant ballerinas? *(Keep going, Ed.)*

Unlike the hated wasp, these silent sexto-pods do not attempt to inflict painful stings upon us at the slightest excuse.

Unlike the menacing blue-bottle, they do not give off an infuriating buzz in the hope of driving us mad. *(More of this, Ed.)*

It is the tiresome moth which keeps one awake at night, when one is trying to read in bed – not our agreeable friend the crane-fly.

It is the killer bee which every year wipes out entire communities in Sub-Saharan Siberia *(Please check, subs.)*

Meanwhile your good old-fashioned British daddy-long-legs reminds us of our childhood and the England that we used to know and love – warm beer, the village cricket pitch, dead pheasants falling like autumn leaves out of the October sky, and the welcome ring of the telephone as the editor of the Daily Mail calls up to offer me £1,000 a word for more of this rubbish.

FREE with tomorrow's Daily Mail, the great British Daddy-Long-legs Wallchart.

★ DAILY MAGYAR ★

Friday, September 29, 2006

NO ONE RIOTS AS PRIME MINISTER ADMITS 'I TOLD LIES FOR YEARS'

by Our Man In London EGON TOAST

THE STREETS of London were eerily empty last night, with cars standing unburned by the roadside, as thousands of protestors failed to pack Trafalgar Square following the shock secret admission by Britain's Prime Minister, Tony Blair, that he had "lied and lied again" throughout his long tenure of office.

A tape leaked to the entire world had Blair cheerfully *(surely 'tearfully'? Ed)* admitting that, "Nothing I have ever said on any subject has been true."

Capital: Not in flames

Budapesticide

The tape that failed to provoke any mass riots, or indeed any interest at all, had Blair confessing that he had:

- **lied repeatedly to Gordon Brown about his intention to step down as party leader;**
- **lied about how he was going to make Britain a better place to live in;**
- **lied about finding weapons of mass destruction in Saddam's underpants;**
- **lied about selling peerages for huge sums of money;**
- **lied about his purchase of properties in Bristol, claiming that he only knew about it when he read about it in the papers.** *(That's enough lies. Ed.)*

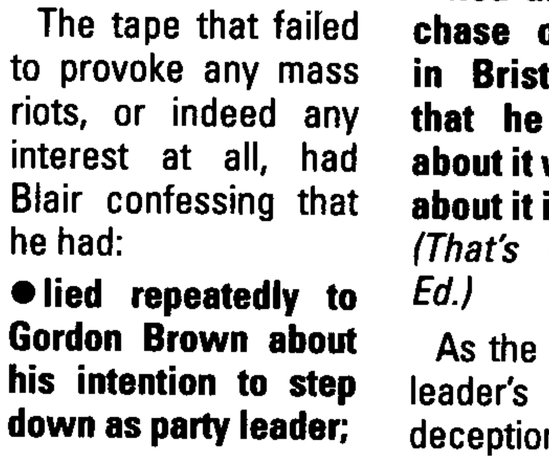
As the news of their leader's systematic deception of his people over nine years was blazoned over the bottom of page 24 in several newspapers, the feelings of the people of London were running low.

Magyar Thatcher

Said one typical Londoner, as he enjoyed a traditional dish of chicken tikka masala and a pint of lager in the Bung and Manager free house, "Tell us something new. I'd have been shocked if you'd told me he was telling the truth."

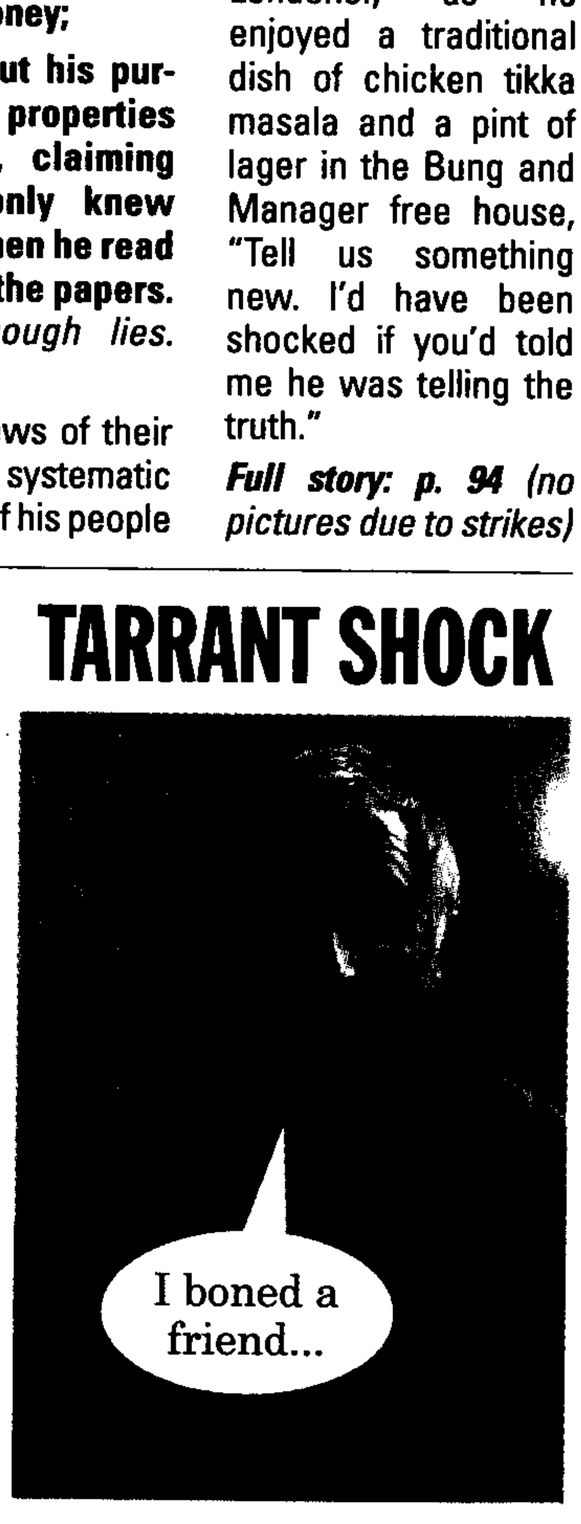
Full story: p. 94 *(no pictures due to strikes)*

MODERN NURSERY RHYMES



Diddle-diddle-dumpling,
my son John
Never goes to bed while
the TV's on.

TARRANT SHOCK



Letters *to the Editor*

SIR – The critics of Pope Benedict XVI's recent lecture at the University of Katzenrausschpielenmaus have entirely missed the point of his scholarly reference to the words uttered in the 12th century by the little-known Byzantine emperor Obscurus III. When Obscurus said that "these Muslims are blood-thirsty villains who are up to no good" ("non bono Islamici sunt", as he put it in the original Greek), what he clearly meant to say was that there was "a window of opportunity for dialogue between our two great faiths at this moment of heightened tension in the Holy Land". To interpret the emperor's words in any other way is a deliberate attempt to exacerbate an already fraught situation.

Dr Nathaniel Beardsworth
Dept. of Byzantine Studies, the University of Doncaster.

SIR – Surely the Pope should be looking first at the plank in his own eye, ie the long record of Islamophobic genocide which has characterised the entire bloodthirsty history of the Christian church ever since it began, right down to the latest crusade led by the neo-con, born-again Blair and Bush in their attempt to destroy Islam, just as their predecessors did when they invaded the Holy Land in search of oil in the Middle Ages.

The Right Rev. David Spart
Dean of Theology, Oxford University.

SIR – Re: the recent comments by His Holiness – is this what they mean by "Papal Bull"?

Mike Giggler
Via email.

● Listen to a podcast of the Pope's recent controversial lecture in full, as read by Stephen Fry, then text us with your views on 84611 on www.telegraphbust.com

A Cabbie writes

EVERY week a well-known taxi driver is invited to give his

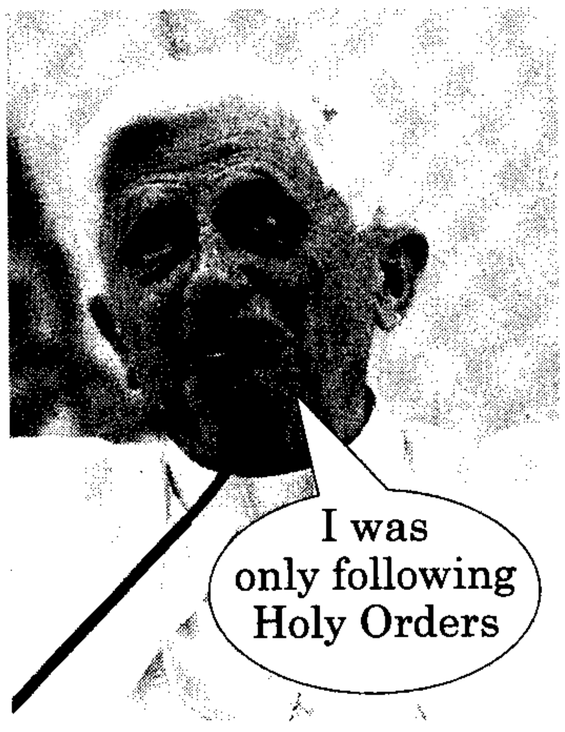
views on an issue of national importance. This week: the Pope's views on Islam by Kevin Snott (Cab No. 1234).

Don't get me wrong, guv, I've got nothing against Catholics. But that Pope hasn't done himself any favours, shooting his mouth off like that about the Muslims. I mean it was obvious that they were going to get the hump and go mad. The man's a complete and total idiot. Mind you, he's got a point of course. I mean, just look at them, those Muslims, blowing themselves up and trying to kill everyone. You can hardly call that "peace-loving", can you? No, give the Pope a medal, that's what I say. It's time someone had the guts to stand up and say what he said, though he shouldn't have said it. What a fool! I had that Abu Hamza in the back of the cab. I asked him for a tip and he said, "Convert to Islam or I'll cut your head off"! Very clever man...

Next week: Eddie Bung (Cab No. 442) on the future of English football.

"We're hoping to be European City of Culture in 1253"

GERMAN POPE SHOCK APOLOGY



LATE DARFUR NEWS

AFRICAN leaders meeting at the U.N. have hailed as historic an agreement to extend the mandate for slaughter in the Darfur region until the end of the year.

"The 7,000 African Union troops currently in the Darfur region will continue looking the other way, as they do now, until at least the end of the year or until every last refugee has been slaughtered, whichever comes first," said a U.N. *(cont. p. 94)*

MUSLIM LEADER DOESN'T APOLOGISE SHOCK

THE WORLD was not amazed yesterday when a senior Muslim leader did not apologise for his insensitive remarks about Jews, Christians, Infidels, Westerners, 9/11, 7/7 or indeed anything else and ***(cont. p. 94)***

PARENTS 'MUST DO MORE' SAYS REID

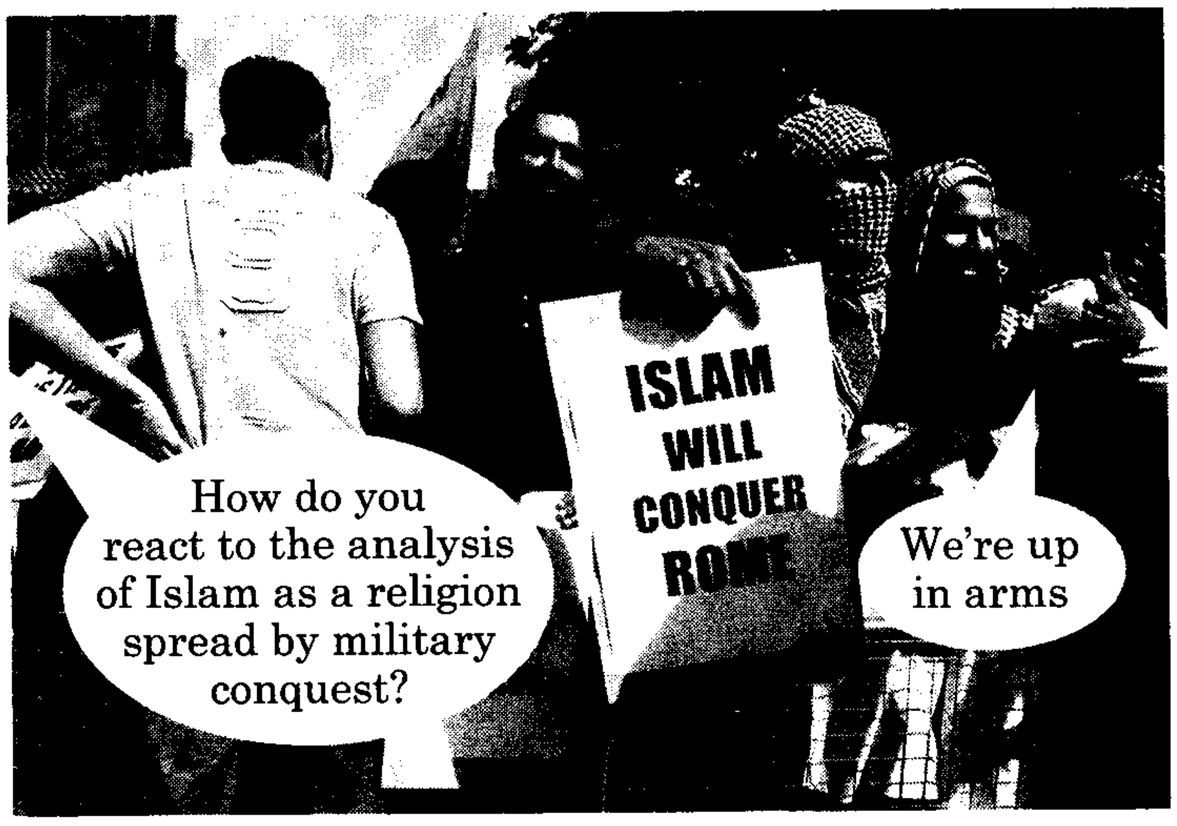
by Our Terror Correspondent **Michael Abu-Grade**

THE Home Secretary John Reid today warned parents that they must be vigilant and look for signs that their children may be about to commit atrocities because they have been recruited into "the army".

"Once recruited into 'the army' these young men may end up travelling to the Middle East where they will be egged on by fellow 'squaddies' to torture and beat Iraqi prisoners to death," warned the Home Secretary.

John Reid said that warning signs that their son may be "a soldier" would be a sudden change to a crew-cut haircut, finding an unfamiliar Khaki uniform in the laundry basket or *(cont p.94)*

HISTORY LESSONS


How do you react to the analysis of Islam as a religion spread by military conquest?
ISLAM WILL CONQUER ROME
We're up in arms

DIARY

PAUL BURRELL

It has been a tough, tough decision. But I now feel that the time has come to break my silence.

I haven't spoken on the subject of Diana, Princess of Wales for these past five minutes. It's been a lonely, harrowing time. Believe me, it has been quite a struggle to stay silent. Five long, long minutes ago, I made a vow to the memory of the lady never to tell all her secrets. But, as the minutes have ticked by, I have come to understand that my first duty is to history. The serialisation of my second volume of royal revelations in The Daily Mail is, I now realise, just what the Princess would have wanted.

For as long as I live, I shall never forget that conversation I had with the woman I always called The Boss. We were together in Kensington Palace, just the two of us, enjoying a quiet game of Scrabble.

Suddenly, she held me by the hand, looked imploringly into my eyes, and said, "Paul, if ever I am killed in a tragic car-crash in Paris, I want you to promise me to spill all my right royal beans – and not just once, but twice.

"Yes, Paul – if ever I die, you must be sure to cash in."

Those prophetic words haunt me to this very day. I owe it to the memory of that wonderful lady to share her secrets with the world.

Until now, I have said little about my relationship with Her Majesty the Queen, but the truth must now outweigh the need for me to protect her little secrets.

Her Majesty was a lovely lady. She thought the world of me.

She would often call by on her nights off. I got used to that tell-tale knock on the door. She would drum out the opening bars of the National Anthem with her clenched fist. That way, I knew it was her.

I'd open the door, and there she'd be, dressed in casual clothes – a pair of designer denims and a favourite kaftan. Often, she'd let her hair hang down, so it flowed over her creamy shoulders. It gave her the more relaxed and carefree look she had always craved.

"You know, you should keep it like that, ma'am – you look truly fabulous," I once ventured, but she looked downcast. "My public would never accept me like that, Paul" she said. "They like me with it up."

At that point, she got out her guitar and sang me one of my all-time favourite songs – Ralph McTell's Streets of London. It was a very private moment, which I have decided to write about only after a great struggle. But one thing I know. I will continue to cherish my memory of a special evening of rest and relaxation spent in the company of a very lovely lady.

Another time, I woke to the sound of handfuls of gravel being hurled against my bedroom window. It was the dead of winter. Putting my head out from my second-floor room, I recognised the tell-tale sparkle of the Queen's tiara glistening in the moonlight.

"Hang on, ma'am," I whispered, "I'll be down in a jiffy."

The lady was clearly distraught, with her tiara thrown on any-old-how, her evening dress trailing in the mud, and her lank hair dripping all over the place.

My heart went out to her. "Come in and warm yourself!" I said, leading her into the kitchen.

Previously, I have always maintained that Her Majesty and I were never on terms of great intimacy. In my previous autobiography, I even went so far as to suggest that our conversations were few and far between, and that we did not speak to one another as equals.

That, I can now reveal, was a white lie aimed at stopping speculation that the Queen and I had ever become engaged.

But the truth is very different.

That night, the two of us huddled up all alone in my kitchen, that gracious lady revealed a side of herself that few ordinary mortals had ever seen.

"Let's face it, Paul" she said, and I detected in her tone a very slight Northern accent which she had long kept hidden from the world at large. "My husband is getting old. He has served me well, a stalwart companion in times both good and bad. But one is only too aware that he won't go on for ever. Before very long, one shall have to face the world on one's own – and, frankly, it is not a prospect to which one is greatly looking forward."

I felt instinctively that HM was leading up to something. And, once again, I was proved right.

For all her public image of self-assurance, this intensely private lady was finding it hard to get the words out.

"I was wondering Paul... if by any chance... after a decent period of mourning... that goes without saying, of course... you might be prepared to... how shall one put this... slip into his shoes?"

It came as a bolt from the blue. Never in my life had I received an offer of marriage from my sovereign. I felt truly humbled.

For a moment, I found her plan attractive. After all, I already knew the ropes. For my part, I would be able to serve my country as the Queen's husband, greeting people with a smile and a friendly handshake, whilst enjoying an intoxicating jet-set lifestyle. And from the Queen's point of view, I would be able to give her the normal life she had always craved, away from the trappings of Royalty which had both defined and stifled her. As my wife, she would be able to be an ordinary woman, vacuuming, dusting, doing the dishes, ironing, making the bed.

But HM's plan had a fatal flaw. I was already a married man. Not for the first time, I found myself wrestling with my duty to my sovereign and my duty to the Burrell family.

Alas, I knew then that our marriage was not to be. But my years in service had also taught me a very important lesson: a refusal may offend.

"Get this down you, love," I said, handing Her Majesty a silver schooner of warm whisky, mixed with honey and lemon. I had to pick my words carefully.

"I thank you for your kind offer, ma'am," I said, "But, alas, it is not to be."

She moaned inwardly, before collecting herself. "Only, promise me this, Paul," she said, choking back the tears. "You will never breathe a word of what has passed between us."

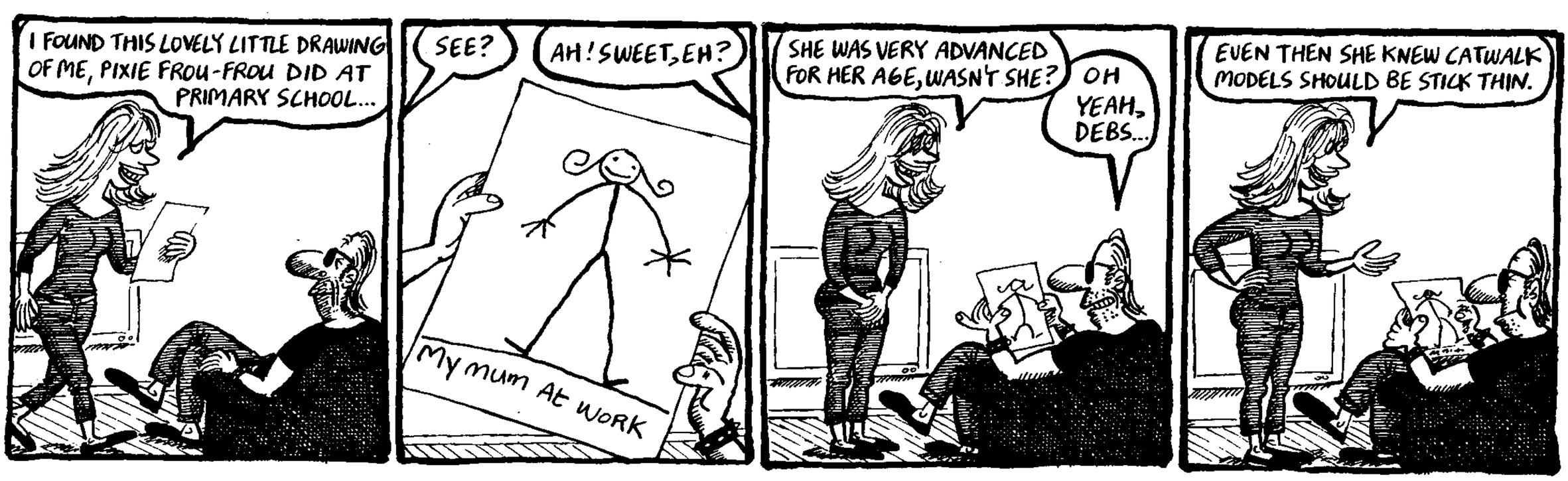
My heart went out to her. "I promise," I said, and I have kept my promise from that day to this.

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


I FOUND THIS LOVELY LITTLE DRAWING OF ME, PIXIE FROU-FROU DID AT PRIMARY SCHOOL...
SEE?
AH! SWEET, EH?
My mum At work
SHE WAS VERY ADVANCED FOR HER AGE, WASN'T SHE?
OH YEAH, DEBS...
EVEN THEN SHE KNEW CATWALK MODELS SHOULD BE STICK THIN.

Literary Review

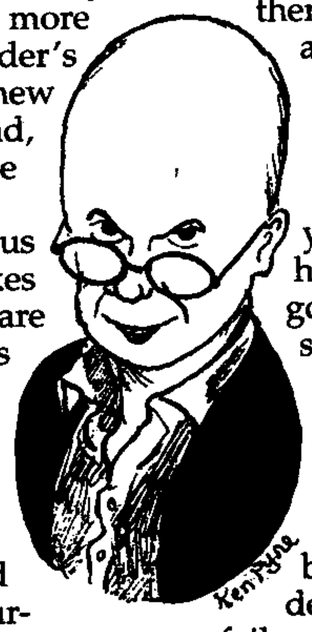
Ego on face

The Sound Of No Hands Clapping

Toby Young

(Abacus, £11.99)

GOOD reviews, bad reviews, they are all the same to Toby Young. "A hatchet job is better than a more balanced review, apparently, since it means the book is more likely to stick in the reader's mind," he writes in his new memoir, tempting fate and, indeed, the many enemies he has made over the years.



In an age of bumptious self-publicists, when the likes of Alastair Campbell are allowed to walk the streets without manacles, Tobes has managed to overcome his more obvious personality defects – ie his personality – to maintain a successful journalistic career and become, to everyone's surprise, a bestselling author. But there was an excellent reason for this: *How To Lose Friends And Alienate People* was a genuinely good book. It told the story of Tobes's five years as a hack in New York, trying to break into Manhattan society without the smallest success. Though vast sacks of salt were required to suspend disbelief – he even had the gall to claim in the acknowledgements that all his stories were true – it was a funny and well-observed piece of work, infinitely better than anything he had done before. It even had a happy ending of sorts, as Tobes met and fell in love with a good woman and showed that he might have learned something from all his mistakes. A film version comes out shortly.

Now, five years later, comes *The Sound Of No Hands Clapping*, a blatant attempt to repeat the trick. This time Tobes is summoned to a meeting with a Hollywood hotshot and commissioned to write a screenplay. Back in London, he wonders at length whether to marry Caroline. They marry. Boris Johnson rings up and offers him the theatre column on *The Spectator*. Other theatre critics are appalled that someone who knows nothing about the theatre could be given such a prestigious job. Caroline falls pregnant. He writes an article about a penis enlargement clinic. He doesn't write his screenplay. *How To Lose Friends And Alienate People* is published and sells many copies. Tobes gets a restaurant column in the *Evening Standard*.

In between all these gripping events, Tobes says and does appalling things as usual and fails to get away with any of them. And as you plough wearily through the book, certain questions ask themselves. Is there a point to all this? Why am I reading it? How on earth did it get published? Is he ever going to shut up?

For slowly it dawns on you that the impossible has happened, that success has gone to Tobes's head. Can a signed-up egomaniac fall even further in love with himself? In the first book he was a failure: he was lonely, miserable, a bit lost. Now he's a success, but his humour still depends on his being a failure. So when *How To Lose Friends* comes out, he quotes liberally from the bad reviews (quite funny) and then boasts incessantly about how well it did (not quite so funny). In the process he enters a sort of Moebius strip of self-regard: having written a successful book about being a failure, he has now written a book about writing a successful book about being a failure, and so has become a success.

But the first book had an underlying narrative, and was about something else other than Toby. This book has no such narrative, and is only about Toby. Even when he becomes a father, it's all about Toby. He could teach Sharon Osbourne a thing or two about self-absorption. Marco Pierre White could take his correspondence course.

The shame is that there is some good, funny writing here, because Tobes obviously works hard at these books, to an extent that may shock anyone who has read his journalism or seen his "plays". If only he could write with as much skill about something or someone other than himself. In the meantime there isn't quite the sound of no hands clapping, as one pair of hands can drown out the most deafening silence – Toby's own. He'll be looking forward to his next book, even if no one else is.

Books & Bookmen

■ WITH most of the big books for this Christmas now in the shops, and millions of pounds worth of advances being gambled on their success, there are already signs of one or two turkeys-in-the-making.

John Murray blew £400,000 on the debut novel *The Meaning Of Night* by Michael Cox. Despite being Book of the Month at Waterstone's and a "doorbuster" title at Borders, there is no sign of the book in the national Top 500 bestsellers and Smiths is already flogging off copies at half price.

And while effing and blinding on Jonathan Ross's Radio 2 show is always good publicity, will it be enough to ensure that Little, Brown turns a coin on Rupert Everett's autobiography *Red Carpets and Other Banana Skins*? Everett's advance was £1.2m; but crucially, the serialisation – the means by which ludicrous shell-outs can sometimes be clawed back – was kept separate by Everett's agent, and flogged with great fanfare ("Hilarious. Outrageous. Shamelessly uninhibited. The showbiz memoirs of the year.") to the *Daily Mail*.

■ WHEN Gerry Johnson joined Waterstone's as managing director, having previously worked at Tesco, Asda and Wickes, he admitted to publishers and employees that he wasn't a big reader.

They needn't have worried though as he was surrounded by people with decades of book experience between them. But a number of high-profile exits seriously weakened the team. Thankfully, after a prolonged eight-month search for a new commercial director, Johnson has almost finalised his new buying team. The line-up includes a non-fiction category manager originally from Tesco, a fiction manager fresh from Asda and the aforementioned commercial director joining from Ocado.

Any suggestion that they are in talks with Happy Shopper and Iceland to complete the line-up are grossly exaggerated.

■ IT SEEMS that WH Smith has written to the managers of the Ottakars branches which are shortly to be converted to Waterstone's in an attempt to poach them. Could Smug finally be trying to employ people who know something about books? And, if so, will any Ottakars managers want to jump ship and become newsagents? Watch this space.

■ LORD GNOME has often chronicled the relentless efforts by Condé Nast boss Nicholas Coleridge to promote his novels and the campaign seems to be paying off.

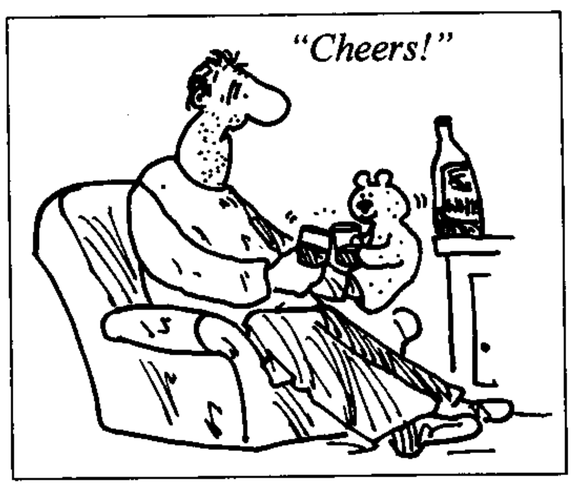
The Amazon listing for his new book, A Much Married Man, has a blizzard of tributes from deliriously satisfied customers: "A terrific read and I cannot recommend it highly enough... I have already bought five copies... I absolutely adored this book, it's such fun!" And so, toe-curlingly, on.

Oddly, however, a check on the names of these supposedly genuine readers reveals that not a single one of them has ever written a review for any other book on Amazon – unusual, given that Amazon customers who recommend titles they like tend to do it quite regularly. Surely it couldn't be another Coleridge-inspired stunt?

Er, quite possibly. The Amazon entry for a previous Coleridge novel, Godchildren, has similarly ecstatic reactions. "I LOVED this novel... A week after finishing the book I am still thinking about it," one reader drools. "One of the best blockbusters I have ever read... I take off my hat to the author," raves another.

Alas! Both verdicts were submitted by "N D Coleridge 'Worcestershire man'". While emailing them from his weekend cottage, poor N D hadn't yet worked out how most authors manage to disguise their identities when reviewing their own books!

'Bookworm'



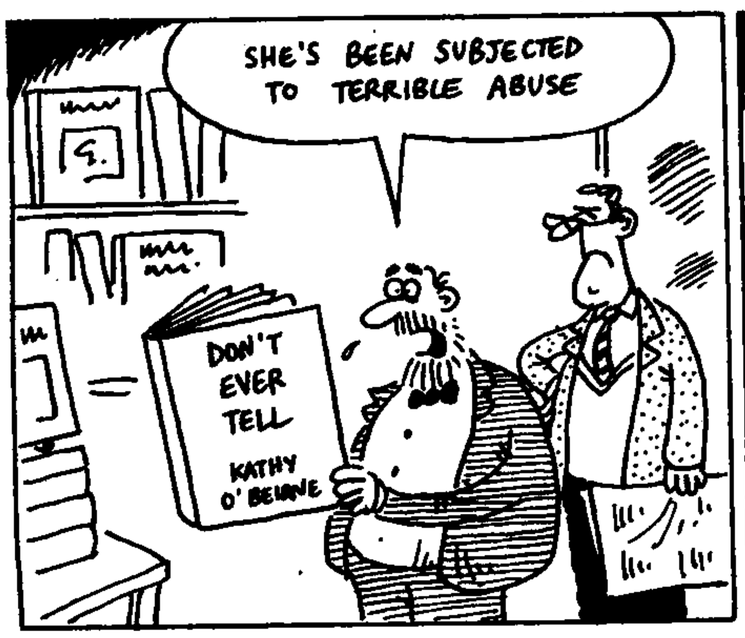
LIBRARY NEWS

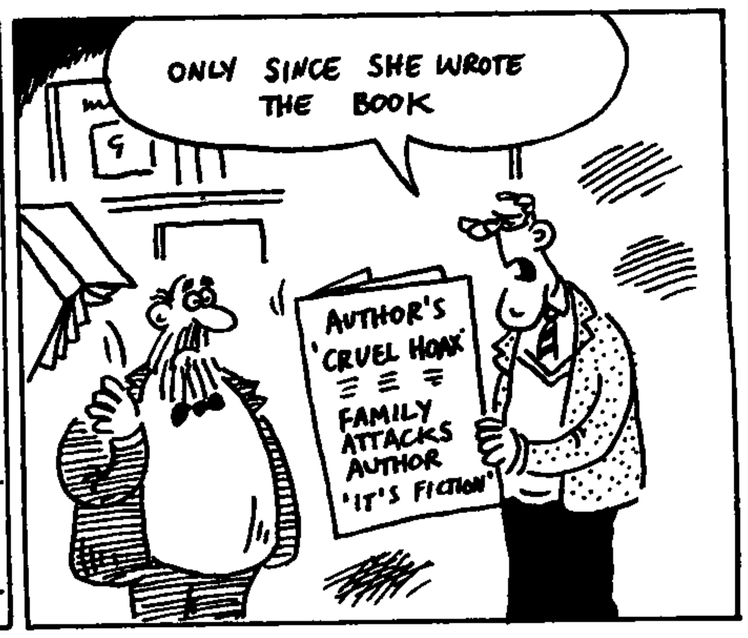
■ "OUR vision for culture and learning in Buckinghamshire is to create an empowering agenda that involves and inspires all sections of our community," read the job ad in the *Times* for a new "culture" chief at Buckinghamshire Council.

"Culture" here means libraries (plus adult learning and heritage), so how's that "empowering" and "inspiring" agenda going?

Buckinghamshire is due to close eight of its branch libraries in October. A further seven closures were proposed in June as the county council sought ways to cut its budget. Instead councillors decided to save money by cutting the opening hours of the remaining libraries, by up to 16 hours a week. The smaller local libraries will be restricted to a "paperback service".

However, the council has found enough money in the budget to offer the new Head of Culture a salary package of up to £75,558. Hurrah!





Pseuds Corner

I love graffiti when it has serifs...
MARIANNE SUHR heard on BBC2's 'Restoration'

Isabella [Blow] sits in the chair wearing a black beaded McQueen dress from his graduation show at St Martins. A stuffed swallow with a broken rosary in its beak sits in a nest of tulle on her head, looking down at her famous puce lips. We smoke cigarettes and eat whitebait. We are both exhausted: me by Fashion Week, her by life.
RUPERT EVERETT,
Vanity Fair

I had a terrible struggle with this [his new novel The House of Meetings]; a bit of life and death... And I realised when I'd done the book that I had to really suffer as a writer. I wasn't sitting around weeping about the poor sods in the Gulag – although I did have stabs of sympathy, obviously, as well – it just attacks your self-confidence. And then when I'd suffered enough and thought about suicide and not writing again...
MARTIN AMIS,
Times Magazine

Some notes on disobedience relating to works on paper

My showing of paintings at Badcock's Newlyn in 2003 and now 'Paths of Disobedience' at the Salthouse Gallery St Ives reflects, and pointedly represents, an aspect of reversal that I hold resolutely onto. This aspect of reversal identifies a reactivation for myself on the idea of 'exit.' Notably this is tantamount to saying "I am only exiting in order to re-engage." Hence disobedience 'ex-ists' in a particular sense. One could be on the margins and at the centre simultaneously...

Pushing at boundaries is invariably an individuation of the disobedient act, important in the evaluation of how art itself emerges, or lies within the reality of an object. By this I mean, ideas in their intellectual capacity, and materiality of paint are not incompatible. It is necessary to achieve this flux of sensuality in the experience. In this sense painting for me has to refer to what thought is, or what thinking means. Aptly, Nietzsche remarks that thinking is always untimely.
Painter and performance artist
KEN TURNER on his new show

Our discussions went on despite interruptions caused by the decaying infrastructure of British capitalism.
A power cut disrupts the founding conference of new British left-wing group 'Permanent Revolution', from its website

He [New York chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten] has a man in China who drives to the border of Burma to collect cinnamon bark and then FedEx it to him.
Telegraph Magazine

We sat down at 1.45pm; we got up, unsteadily, at 5.15pm. It costs £97.50 a head, plus service, but the extraordinary care, creativity and effort put into the whole production makes the price a genuine bargain, indeed almost an act of charity.
ANDREW GILLIGAN lunches at the Fat Duck, *Evening Standard*

CONTRIBUTORS: Rachel Simnett, Strobes, Laura McNair-Wilson, Mark Osborn, Ann Keith, Andrew Moth, Anon.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE

The thief, the dealer, his killer and the Labour ministers

THE conviction of William Gage, a small-time Glasgow villain, for the murder of Justin McAlroy, a drug dealer, has raised little interest outside Scotland. But that might be about to change given the connections between the victim and senior Labour ministers and the fact that Gage's conviction has recently been referred to the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

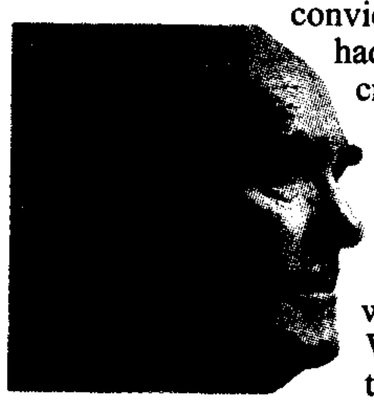
Only days before McAlroy was gunned down outside his home in Cambuslang, on the outskirts of Glasgow in 2002, he had been wining and dining with the Scottish first minister Jack McConnell (pictured right) and with John Reid (below), then minister for Northern Ireland, at a Labour party fundraising dinner.

McAlroy's businessman father, Tommy McAlroy, regularly hosted so-called Red Rose dinners for New Labour at his Dalzeil Country Park Golf Club.

In fact, both father and son had been the subject of international police surveillance during a joint drug enforcement operation to stop heroin coming into Scotland from Estonia. The McAlroys were filmed meeting two men, Robert Wright and Les Brown, who were later extradited to stand trial in Estonia where they admitted being part of a heroin-smuggling racket.

While there has never been any suggestion that Tommy McAlroy was involved in crime, his son Justin was "hit" as part of a gangland feud, a hooded gunman firing five bullets into his body and head as he arrived home.

The discovery an hour later of a partially burned out white car, complete with clothing with tell-tale DNA samples and explosive traces and a mobile phone, soon led police to William Gage, a convicted robber. A white car had been seen leaving the crime scene and Gage had once owned the burned out car; his DNA was also on the clothing, and the mobile contained some numbers of people who were known to him. When McAlroy's wife then pointed to Gage in the dock and said he was the man she had seen running away after she had heard the fatal shots and looked from her window, it seemed like an open and shut case against him.



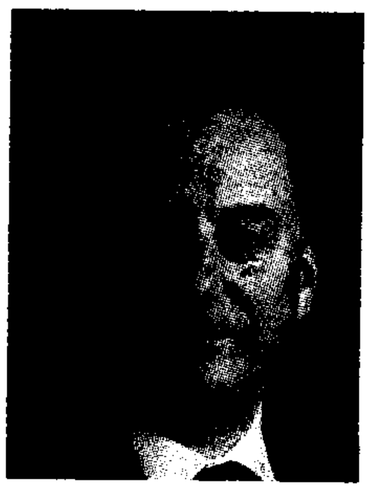
In fact it is far from that. Even the trial judge took the unusual step of saying that he had several doubts about Gage's conviction; and after a long investigation, the BBC Scotland television programme *Frontline Scotland* went as far as to declare him innocent. Nevertheless, last March his case was dismissed by the court of appeal.

John McManus, of the Miscarriages of Justice Organisation, believes strongly that Gage was "an easy set-up". And this means, he says, "that the real killer has got away with it". So what are the question marks over the prosecution case?

First of all, there is the question of identification. Initially Mrs McAlroy told police she had only glimpsed her husband's hooded killer, under street lighting and through her window, and that she did not think she would be able to identify him. Like other witnesses she first described him as being about 5ft 10ins tall and as wearing a quilted or padded jacket.

But after police found clothing in a car – a thin cagoule and scarf – they put it on a dummy and asked Mrs McAlroy if she could identify it, showing only the dummy's eyes. When she later identified Gage in court, she said she would never "forget the eyes". This was somewhat at odds with her initial statement.

No one is saying that Tracey McAlroy lied, but Gage's lawyers believe that identification "stunts" - presenting victims or witnesses with images that they might have seen - can play tricks with the memory. Only her evidence placed Gage at the murder scene and only she said she recognised the cagoule. All the other witnesses continued to insist that the killer's jacket had been padded, as she herself initially declared.



Further, only one witness, Stephen Madden, said he saw the gunman pull off his mask and that he had short cropped hair. William Gage had long hair down to below his shoulders and Madden did not identify him as the killer. Gage is also tall at 6ft 2ins.

It appears that another identification "stunt" was pulled off in relation to the suspect white car. The car found abandoned in Easterhouse was a white Saab. One witness, Charles Bowman, was initially adamant that the car he had seen had been a white Volvo. It was only after being shown pictures by police of the Saab that he agreed it was similar to the one he had seen. More significantly, not one CCTV camera picked up the car travelling from the scene of the crime to Easterhouse where it was found.

Regarding the firearms residue, John Lloyd, a Home Office forensic scientist, says that had the clothing produced by police been worn by the man pulling the trigger, it would have had far more residue on it than the few particles that were found. More residue traces were found in the victim's pocket than on the suspect cagoule. No traces was found in the rest of the car or at Gage's home.

In addition, Gage had an alibi for the night of the murder: he was with his girlfriend Annie Ross, something she had noted in her diary, though the prosecution disputed this.

It's true Gage did not help himself at the trial. He did not go into the witness box, perhaps not daring to reveal to whom he had sold the abandoned car. He also had form having served three and half years for driving the getaway car for friend who had held up a jewellery shop with an imitation firearm. But he was really a small time crook compared to those who were - and it appears still are - waging a drugs turf war in Glasgow.

At the time of McAlroy's death, he was rumoured to owe £50,000 to drugs baron Stewart Boyd (who later died in a car crash in Spain). And four days before he was shot, he had been warned that his time was running out.

Although Justin McAlroy had been under close surveillance by Scottish drug enforcment officers (to the extent that they had even warned Labour's first minister before he and John Reid went to the Red Rose fund-raiser), surveillance was called off just before the shooting because of staff shortages. This created the perfect window of opportunity for his killer.

POST OFFICE PRIVATISATION SPECIAL

Postman Pat and a very Smug cat

THE stealthy privatisation of the Post Office continues with the shut down of the first batch of six "Crown", ie publicly-owned, town centre outlets so that nearby WH Smith branches can take over.

The move has gone ahead with minimal consultation, while in parliament Trade Minister Jim Fitzpatrick (pictured) has referred all questions to the Post Office as "operational matters". There they predictably hit the wall of "commercial confidentiality". Thus nobody can know how WH Smug won the work, what it paid for it and what the company's plans are, if any, to invest in the services (though the Post Office insists it does have some).

Meanwhile existing Post Office staff have not been transferred to WH Smith on equal pay and conditions; bosses have instead offered them jobs elsewhere in the organisation or redundancy, leaving WH Smith to hire its own staff on poorer terms. Unsurprisingly objections are growing and strikes have already been staged in the areas affected by the first wave of privatisations. A parliamentary early-day motion condemning the plans has support from more than 50 MPs so far.

The official justification for the move is that the 500 Crown Offices are losing £50m a year. But instead of seeking to turn this around, the Post Office is pulling the plug – not helped by distinctly unjoined-up government decisions such as cancelling the card account used by many pensioners.

PS: Aptly-named Royal Mail director Richard Handover was until last year chairman of WH Smith. A spokesman assured the *Eye* he had nothing to do with the contracts.

MANY more Post Offices are simply being put out to franchise – again with little consultation and not much competence. The story at one, in Chorlton, Manchester, is typical.

A notice went up in the Post Office window simply announcing that the local branch would be taken over by a company called SFK Enterprise Ltd, "a newly registered company" whose "management team... have nearly ten years' experience in running an existing post office branch". One local campaigner decided to check out the company, only to find that... it didn't exist.

Only several weeks later was a new company, called FSK Enterprises Ltd, set up and handed the franchise. But still nobody knows anything about the people taking over their local post office and what their "ten years experience" amounts to.

The approach to staff at the branch is more ruthless still. Asked whether their rights would be protected under their new employers, the Post Office's "national consultation team leader" Janet Passmore told the campaigner that regulations safeguarding them didn't apply "as we relocate all the affected employees away from that office prior to the change". The new franchisees will thus, just like WH Smith, be able to take on their own staff on the cheap.

THE Post Office has also appointed a new marketing director: Gary Hockey-Morley, who joins after 13 years at Abbey National where he had a "series of senior marketing roles".

What his new employer didn't announce was that in 2002 Abbey was fined £1m for mis-selling, ie fraudulently marketing, endowment mortgages to tens of thousands of customers between 1995 and 1999, and a further £800,000 last year for failing to deal with their compensation claims properly. Just the man to boost the trusty old Post Office's financial services ambitions.

FORENSICS

The war on error

AS IF the fight against crime and terrorism weren't demanding enough, two public bodies who are meant to be on the same side in the battle are now taking one another to court.

The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) and the Home Office (with the help of their respective lawyers) find themselves at loggerheads as the MPA wants to kick the Forensic Science Service out of its laboratories in Lambeth, south London – the very lab, say insiders, that carried out vital work in identifying the 7/7 London bombers.

Last Christmas, as reported by the *Eye* the Home Office turned its Forensic Science Service into a "Gov-co", or wholly-owned government company, as a first step towards flogging the poor scientists off. But in doing so Home Office lawyers forgot some of the details - like who owns and who leases the laboratories.

At Lambeth the Home Office was leasing the FSS lab from the Met authority. When it set up the Gov-co, it forgot to transfer the lease. Thus the new company was suddenly an illegal tenant and the Home Office was guilty of unlawfully subletting the premises.

One might have thought the problem could have been resolved round a table over a cup of coffee. But that would have denied m'learned friends (who cocked up in the first place) the chance to go to court and fill their wallets with yet more public money.

An MPA spokesman said: "The MPA took this action in response to the lease on the property being breached, by it being sublet to a separate company without necessary consent... The MPA is keen to resolve this matter with the FSS before the matter reaches court. The MPA is a publicly accountable body and must ensure its position is protected."

Taxpayers' money should be protected too, of course... or doesn't that matter?

WHISTLEBLOWING

Wight and wrong

THE flaws in legislation supposed to protect whistleblowers have again been exposed in the employment courts with the extraordinary case of accountant and IT expert, Alec Wight.

Mr Wight, 62, had worked for East Sussex accountants Plummer Parsons for 15 years, when relations broke down over disputes about software licences and a new computer system that was being installed at the firm by outside contractors.

At the end of a lengthy hearing, an employment tribunal in Southampton found in no uncertain terms that Mr Wight had been unfairly dismissed. It accused Plummer Parsons partners of "unscrupulous" conduct in trying to terminate Mr Wight's contract "at the lowest possible cost" and of "scraping the barrel" in trying to justify the termination.

The tribunal said Plummer Parsons abandoned plans to reach an amicable settlement with Mr Wight and instead "by one or more of its partners was doing everything possible to obtain or to create evidence in which they might bring disciplinary charges against the claimant". It found the company witnesses "evasive", that minutes of meetings had been falsified and that evidence had been "created" after a decision had been taken to get rid of Mr Wight.

The way in which the company had once tried to give him an oral warning was "similarly underhand and deceitful", according to the tribunal. It had failed to inform Mr Wight that he was under suspicion; failed to give him any notice; conducted interviews on a false premise and failed to provide him with details of the "charges" against him.

The company's attitude was illustrated by a computer password compiled some time earlier by one of the partners: "AKRW2GO" - AKRW being Mr Wight's initials.

The tribunal also heard that after Mr Wight had launched his unfair dismissal case, the firm had orchestrated a police raid on his home, claiming that he had stolen company material when the company knew he used his home as an extension of his office (paying for his internet connection). There he kept back-up copies of his company work. Eventually allegations against him were dropped and his possessions were returned, but the distress and inconvenience he and his family suffered was immense.

The company also brought a high court action compelling Mr Wight to hand over all his retained company records, which included material on which he had made annotations about his case. Police also admitted that it had also shown the material it confiscated from Mr Wight to Plummer Parsons, which would of course have included details of his employment action.

The tribunal also found that the complaints Mr Wight had made about software licensing and about the new computer system being implemented at the firm were made in good faith and were protected disclosures of the kind that are covered by the whistleblowing legislation in the 1996 Employment Rights Act. But then it went on to rule that because these protected disclosures were not the *principal* reason for the company driving Mr Wight out, he was not covered by its provisions.

The tribunal decided that some partners found him a perfectionist and difficult to manage; and that earlier they had tried to reduce his retirement age from 65 to 60 and had also sought to reduce his and another employee's shareholding in a software developing venture company. The other employee had resigned in protest.

The trouble with protected disclosure cases is that it is difficult to unravel exactly what proportion of whistle-blowing contributes to any breakdown in relations and it is easy for an employer to cloud the picture. In Mr Wight's case the tribunal accepted that he was making protected complaints about software licenses for many years, but that the other issues subsequently intervened.

The consequences of the tribunal decisions over whistleblowing are that Mr Wight's damages are capped at £60,000 – and likely to be swallowed up in his enormous costs, particularly now that Plummer Parsons are to appeal. Fortunately Mr Wight has at least secured free representation from an experienced employment barrister thanks to the Bar's pro bono unit.

TAX DODGING

Red faced 'un

"GETTING the better of the taxman is an almost universal pleasure," opined a *Financial Times* leader after Cadbury Schweppes had made some ground in the European Court this month in efforts to defeat laws against siphoning profits into tax havens. And for one company - none other than *FT* owner Pearson Group PLC - it's also a very furtive pleasure.

Buried in records submitted to Companies House are the accounts of one of Pearson's subsidiary companies called Pearson International Finance Ltd (PIFL). Nothing suspicious there – any self-respecting multinational needs an international financing arm. But what's this? The accounts reveal an "investment in Pearson Finance Partnership (Bermuda)", valued at a cool £409m. No doubt the pink 'un sells a few copies to Bermuda's bankers and businessmen stopping over to check their offshore accounts, but does it need a near half-billion pound outfit to do it?

The real reason multinationals get involved in Bermuda is, of course, for the tax dodging opportunities it affords, something Pearson was reluctant to discuss with the *Eye*. The Bermudan interest was set up to "hedge foreign exchange risk" – but why Bermuda and not the UK or US where similar operations could be easily established? No explanation. And how many other tax haven companies does Pearson use to reduce its tax bill? Again, a spokeswoman refused to say, stating only say that the company "has a duty to shareholders to minimise its tax charge" and discloses everything to the authorities.

Pearson is indeed adept at reducing its tax bill. In the last three years its accounts show it has paid just £150m tax on profits of £1.1bn – significantly below both the UK's 30 percent corporation tax and rates up to 45 percent in the US where the firm makes 70 percent of its profits.

Oddly, despite the value of Pearson's Bermudan interest, the company's published accounts find no space in their 223 glossy pages to mention it or any other tax haven companies. But if you've ever wondered why Britain's financial paper of record expresses bloke-in-the-pub-type sympathy for tax avoiders, it's worth remembering that its owner is also up to its neck in it.

PS: The *Eye's* favourite tax avoider Mapeley, headquartered in Guernsey but using Bermudan companies to salt most of its profits away, has just been admitted to FTSE4Good - the index of "ethical" stocks to which membership is much sought-after by companies looking for the socially responsible investor's cash. It seems not paying any tax, of which Mapeley proudly boasts, is no bar to entry to the club jointly owned by the Stock Exchange... and the *FT*.

CARE HOMES

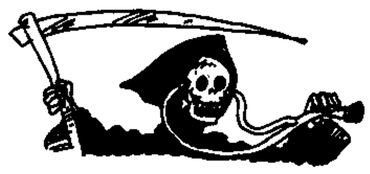
Pay daze

CARE UK has told staff in the homes for the elderly it runs in Islington, north London, that they must take a pay cut.

The company said it was no longer viable to continue paying the wages and benefits (hardly generous) that it inherited when it took over the running of the homes from the local authority.

Under European Union regulations, (Don't)Care UK is legally bound to honour employees' terms and conditions; but, claiming poverty, it was seeking to buy staff off with a lump sum one-off payment in return for new contracts.

How strange that in its interim report to shareholders in June, rather than plead poverty Care UK actually boasted about its profits. "Residential care achieved an improvement of 10 percent turnover and 12 percent in operating profit, reflecting the successful commissioning of the new contracted homes in the London boroughs of... Islington, Richmond and Hammersmith and Fulham," it said.



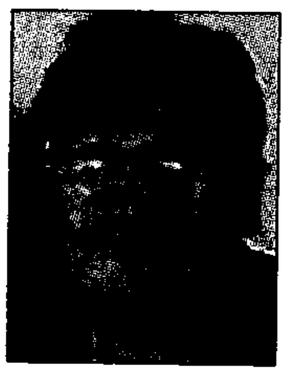
HEALTH SPECIAL

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Patricia Who-itt?

IT'S now official: Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt is *not* the person driving the NHS. She has just come second in a poll in the *Health Service Journal* of the "Fifty people with most influence on the NHS".

Sitting in the number one slot was none other than marketising fundamentalist Paul Corrigan (pictured), Tony Blair's chief health adviser and husband of arch-Blairite Cabinet Office minister, Hilary Armstrong.



Interestingly, in the list of company chiefs and health advisers, the *Eye*'s old management consultancy chums at McKinsey manage two appearances in the top 20 of the health charts. McKinsey Global Healthcare is in at number 16, largely for the company's work with Monitor, the foundation trust regulator; and then Monitor itself appears at number 11. As *Eye* readers will be well aware, McKinsey picked up nearly two-thirds of Monitor's £19.4m budget for consultancy work.

And what of those old stalwarts of the NHS, like the Royal College of Nurses? No one seems to think that has much influence at all. The Royal College of GPs meanwhile slips in at number 28, with health union Unison in 26th position.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

Phantom visits

WHILE denying plans for "baby asbos" in his social exclusion speech earlier this month, Tony Blair announced "new arrangements" for health visitors and midwives to support young parents, with around 10 to 15 percent of first born children getting two-year home visiting programmes.

On 14 September, Hilary Armstrong came up with the details: a scheme whereby health visitors will visit dysfunctional families intensively until children are two years old. It's based on the "nurse-family partnership" system running since the 1970s in parts of the US, where it has significantly reduced abuse and neglect, and resulted in fewer arrests of teenagers who were part of the programme as babies. Ten pilot projects of the scheme are to be launched in the UK next year.

It's obviously a good idea - but who will provide this service?

Eye 1163 reported the devastating job cuts in community health in recent months. Eighty-one community staff in Hackney, including many health visitors, lost their jobs, as did a third of all health visitors in North Hampshire – and similar cuts are happening all over the country. Meanwhile 42 newly-trained health visitors and district nurses were unable to find work after completing their course in Chelmsford because so many cash-strapped community health trusts are cutting such services.

The Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association says many health visitors already have caseloads of more than 500 families each and that numbers of health visitors are at a 12-year low. So that's yet another announcement that has little to do with reality in the health service.

HEALTH PRIVATISATION

Job lot

THE revolving door between the health service and the private companies making a fortune from it is spinning faster than ever.

Having just secured a £1bn PFI deal for the St Bartholomew and Royal London hospitals NHS trust, chief executive Paul White is off to telecoms and IT giant BT in the new year to run the company's NHS work.

BT's most important health contract is of course the £1bn deal to install new IT systems in the capital's trusts under the disastrous National Programme for IT.

But NHS trusts don't have to use systems offered under the national programme. They could go, and often are going, their own way. Indeed a briefing by White to the trust board on 6 September reveals that, following BT's sacking of its software provider, "over the next few weeks the Trust will be examining [BT's] proposal in detail and will undertake an in-depth evaluation to ensure it meets the Trust's criteria for successful implementation".

As BT is already struggling desperately on the programme, securing work across a major trust like Bart's will be essential. No surprise then that White talked up the BT proposal, concluding: "Once the trust is confident that the system is fit for purpose and will provide the right infrastructure, a deployment plan will be agreed for the rollout ..."

A trust spokesman told the *Eye*: "Mr White has declared this interest and, as is usual in such circumstances, will not be involved in any future discussions or decisions concerning the implementation of the National Programme for IT." But he clearly was very much involved at a time when he knew he would be taking a top job at BT.

Coming the other way is Ruth Carnall, who takes over as interim chief executive for the NHS in London following David Nicholson's appointment to run the health service nationally. Ms Carnall left the NHS in 2004 to become a consultant with a firm called Verita, advising the Department of Health on various commercialisation initiatives, and a director of Care UK, which recently won a contract to run GP services in Dagenham. She will, insists the NHS, "be standing aside from both positions". That's all right, then.

Sweetener & sour

NOTHING succeeds like failure in the NHS. Just take the case of Chris Appleby, who earlier this year trousered a half a million pound pay-off after agreeing to "retire" as chief executive of Pennine Acute Hospitals Trust, one of the largest in the country, after a vote of no-confidence from hospital medics and pressure from Patricia Hewitt.

To the dismay of doctors in Leeds, Appleby has just started a six-month contract as director of operations at the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

Appleby took early retirement (at only 49) after medical staff condemned his management methods which, they claimed, meant patient care suffered in the bid to meet targets. An independent report, by Sir George Alberti, a former president of the Royal College of Physicians, concluded that a combination of leadership styles and pressure to improve standards had lethally soured relations between managers.

Appleby's lucrative pay-off caused a storm as it emerged that the Pennines trust was already facing a £28m deficit and that 800 jobs (other than his) were to go.

You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

A PROPOSED new listing on the AIM market for International Images, which owns the image rights for photographs of and from a variety of Hollywood stars and films, marks the City return of Alan Judd, generously described as a "serial entrepreneur". International Images announced in August that it was seeking to raise £3m via brokers Daniel Stewart.

The PR campaign for the International Images float which has not yet happened points to the fact that Judd had previously founded Online Travel Corporation, which had been sold to Lastminute.com for £55m in 2004, and had also started another travel company, AIM-listed Western & Oriental, which was listed earlier this year.

Accountant Judd had in fact left OTC, where he had been chairman, two years before the takeover and later sold most of his shares. He left Western & Oriental last July. The shares are currently at a year's low of 11.25p – less than half their peak price.

But it is International chief executive Judd's more distant and way back image that is perhaps more interesting, plus some of the companies he has been associated with in the intervening years.

Judd, now 62, first registered on the City – and *Eye*'s – radar as long ago as 1971 when he suddenly left as finance director of Standard Tyre following the collapse of a possible takeover bid. Judd was a protégé of colourful broker Tony Rudd – father of influential City PR man Roland – and Gerald Kelly, whose firm Rowe Rudd was behind the bidders.

Several months later in 1972 Judd reappeared as a director of the small textile firm D.M. Lancaster. But this did not prove a great success and Judd left at the end of 1976.

His next appearance as chairman of the Piccadilly unit trust group was much more newsworthy, especially after stockbroker Russell Colin-Jones decided to celebrate Easter 1978 by walking off Beachy Head. Colin-Jones's dramatic departure from the City triggered a Stock Exchange investigation, which grew into a City Police probe.

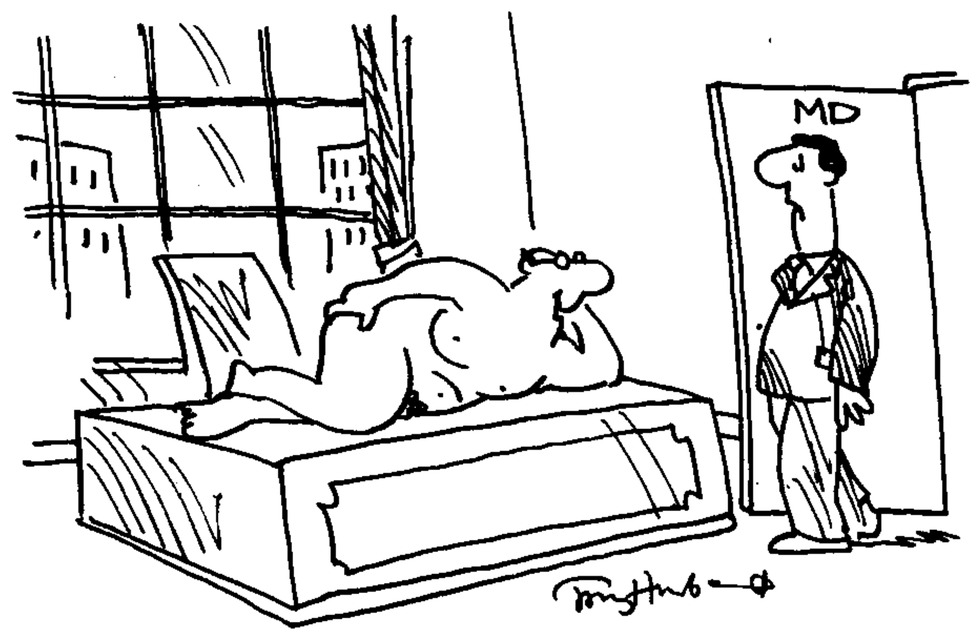
The investigation centred on allegations of share-price rigging between unit trust groups and certain brokers concerning shares in some nine companies. The deals had often been done via "put-through" transactions effectively outside the market. The allegations were that share deals had been to the benefit of insiders and against the interest of unit trust holders.

It emerged that the Piccadilly unit trust group had been involved in certain of the transactions. In June 1978 its investment director Neil Scott resigned over his personal share dealings. Scott also accepted responsibility for a share deal carried out in the name of Judd's company, Main Union Securities.

The police investigation into Piccadilly dragged on for three years. A report was sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions in early 1981, by which time Judd had left Piccadilly.

His next sighting, also in 1978, was at Tiger Securities, which had been set up by magician and would-be dealmaker Robert Knight. Judd did not stay very long, leaving later in the year after just eight months. A good call. Tiger was not a success and collapsed in 1981. Knight later had his own problems with the police.

Ultimately in 1982 the DPP decided to take no further action over the "put-through" scandal. The dead Colin-Jones was a convenient and appropriate fall guy. However, Judd's friends felt he had been badly treated and that the blame really rested on Scott and Colin-Jones.



"Martin, come in. Listen, I'm looking for someone to take over Robert's department"

Four years later, in 1986, Judd was in the firing line again, this time from creditors of video business VCL which had been wound up. Creditors wanted to know why the company's rights to more than 200 titles had been sold for £150,000 to an overseas company VCL Inc that later sold them to Richard Branson for a reported £11.5m. Judd told creditors that money went to a Jersey company whose directors he claimed not to know. Judd did admit, however, that he was now a consultant to Branson.

Judd found himself associated with more failing companies in the 1990s by which time he had become a club owner with the Limelight, which was a hot spot for a while. West End Leisure was compulsorily wound up in 1992. West End Property Holdings went into receivership in 1992, about a year after Judd resigned as a director. Premiere Design Group was compulsorily wound up in 1994 several months after Judd resigned. DRJ was compulsorily wound up in 1998, as was Digital Workspace – again Judd resigned the previous year. At least two other companies where Judd had been a director were wound up within two years of his departure.

Now no doubt with several of those companies the post-Judd management was to blame for what subsequently happened. Still, he does seem to have been more than a little unlucky or accident-prone.

But the City will doubtless prefer with International Images to ignore the past and focus on his more recent successes with Online Travel and Western & Oriental, plus the new company's potential. And why not? Serial entrepreneurs, after all, are only as good as their last deal. So investors can have every confidence in Alan Judd.

WHILE Leeds United chairman Ken Bates has been busy deciding on a new manager after sacking Kevin Blackwell, less noticed has been some odd events at one of the companies involved in the former Chelsea boss's takeover in January last year of the Championship strugglers.

Leeds United Football Club was initially a 50 percent shareholder following the Bates takeover. Then, with his inimitable sense of humour, Bates renamed the company Romans Heavies – a not too subtle dig at new Chelsea owner, Roman Abramovich. Despite Bates receiving some £17m of Abramovich's money, sufficient to make it worthwhile moving to Monaco, there is no love lost between the two owners. Romans Heavies then held almost 50 percent in the company that owned the other 50 percent of the Leeds football club.

So what is this? On 6 June Romans Heavies was compulsorily wound up by an unnamed creditor who had filed a petition in April. The company is now in liquidation. Bates resigned as a director in March.

The company's main shareholder was last recorded as the mysterious Forward Sports Fund, which gives an address in London but is assumed to be based in Switzerland. Forward made a loan of some £4m to the soccer club last year.

Another shareholder was Sports Investments (Leeds) for which notice has been given of a compulsory striking off by Companies House.

Just what all this means – if anything – for the ownership of the Championship side remains to be seen. It issued a £4.5m block of new shares a year ago but it is not clear yet as to who bought those shares and so controls the club. The suggestion was Forward. Romans Heavies was said to be left with a 3 percent stake.

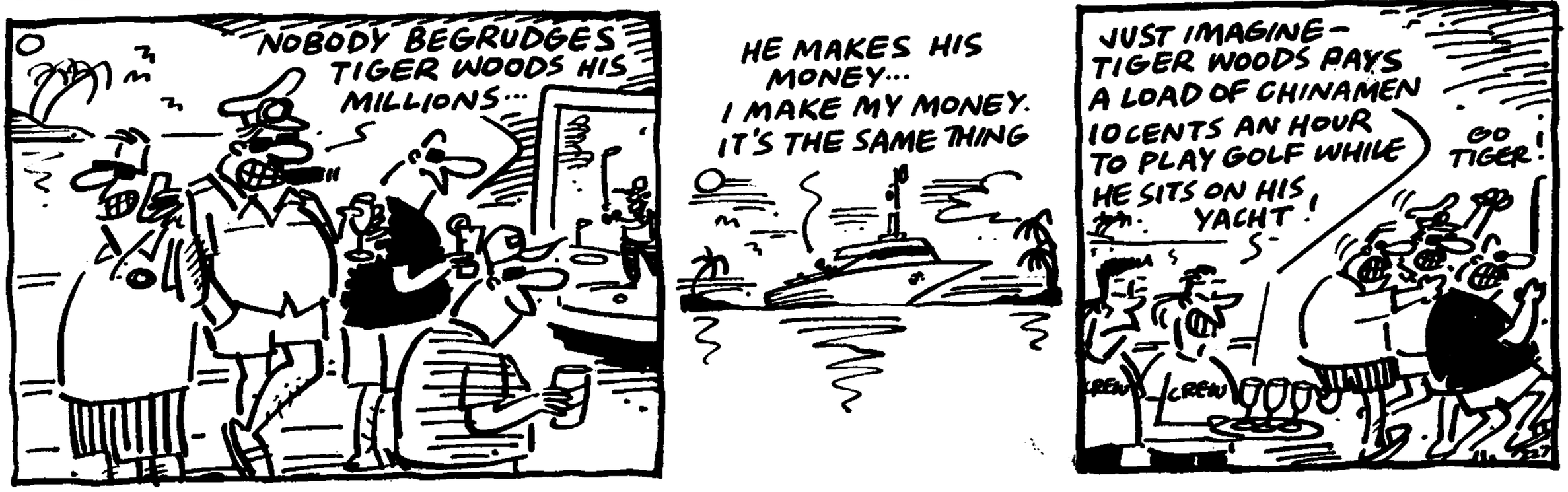
Doubtless these events are perfectly normal and Bates will as usual reveal all in his own time.

EVER resourceful, the Nigerian "419" letter fraudsters and their Eastern European imitators behind the long-running "open your bank account and say after me – take it all" fraud (involving supposedly benefiting from laundering the corrupt proceeds of crooked civil servants, bank officials, dead dictators, etc) have a new wheeze.

Email accounts have been regularly bombarded in recent months by something called

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG


NOBODY BEGRUDGES TIGER WOODS HIS MILLIONS...
HE MAKES HIS MONEY... I MAKE MY MONEY. IT'S THE SAME THING
JUST IMAGINE- TIGER WOODS PAYS A LOAD OF CHINAMEN 10 CENTS AN HOUR TO PLAY GOLF WHILE HE SITS ON HIS YACHT!
GO TIGER!
CREW
CREW

the Norway Consulting Group – Norway presumably being seen as squeaky clean, unlike Nigeria! Strangely, the group uses a domain name from China!

"Top vacancy of the month". "Best job offer – don't miss your chance". "Got free time? Become richer". These are the irresistible offers that arrive every day and sometimes several times a day. All you have to do is use a bank account to receive and then transmit by Western Union or MoneyGram money transfer funds onwards from Norway Consulting Group to its "numerous clients worldwide". For this simple task in assisting the clearly over-worked financial manager, the reward is no less than an 8 percent commission from the transfers which should occupy no more than two to three hours work a day.

Of course that commission only comes after the transfers. And meanwhile you will have handed over your bank details to Norway Consulting about which, despite being in business since 1997, information appears scarce to non-existent.

Now a suspicious person might wonder why a company "operating in the corporate consulting market" would need to use money transfer agencies if it had access to banks? And why need to use private individuals to do the transferring? They might also wonder why they would give away such a big slice of the amount being transferred – much greater than normal bank charges?

The answer is of course that this is a con. Not just will the victim's bank details be open to use or abuse, but if there is any money sent and passed on it could well be the proceeds of crime making the individual liable to money-laundering charges. Norway Consulting is not the only player in this new game, but it is the most active.

'Slicker'

THE FA'S OWN GOA£

FOLLOWING allegations of transfer "bungs" in last week's *Panorama*, the Football Association was quick to announce its own inquiry. But revelations at a VAT tribunal last month show that it can't even spot rule-breaking under its nose – or, worse, that it can but chooses to ignore it.

The tribunal heard how, as part of an unsuccessful attempt to get VAT rebates, Newcastle United routinely lied to the FA about its use of agents. From 2000, clubs were required to report the agents employed on all transfers and contract negotiations so that international rules banning agents from acting both for club and player could be policed. The problem for greedy Newcastle directors was that the club wanted to reclaim VAT on its payments to the footballers' agents who, chief operating officer Russell Cushing told the tribunal, were also acting for the club behind the players' backs – in clear breach of the rules.

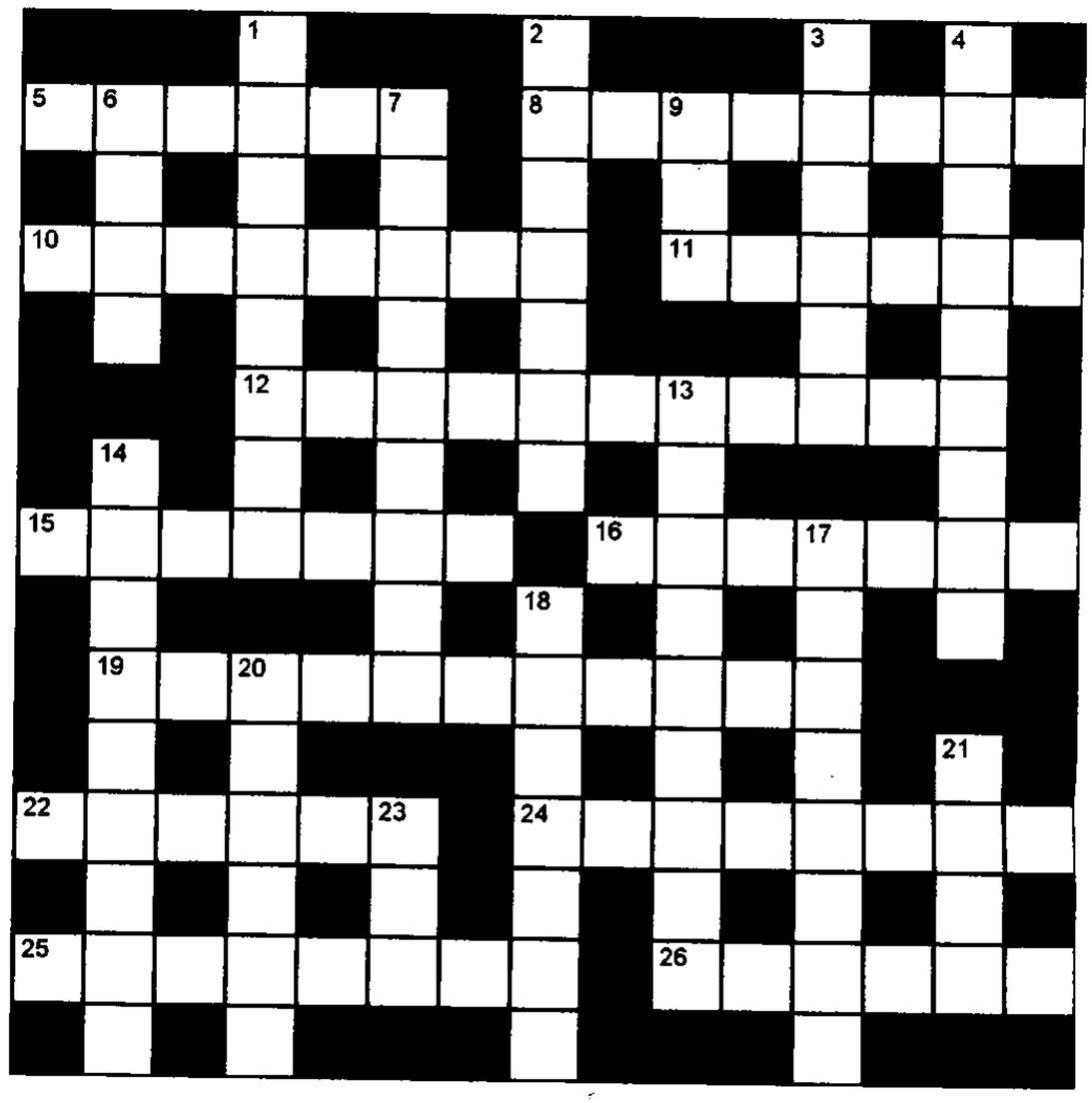
To get the tax back the agents had to be acting for the club. The tricky issue for the club was how to fill in the paperwork so that it could tell the FA it was obeying the rules and convince Customs it could have its tax back.

The answer was to say that the agent acted *only* for the club when this was clearly not so. Forms were duly despatched to the FA on all the club's transfers from late 2000 until recently showing how much the club had paid the agent and claiming that the players had used no agents themselves. But, as the FA would have known full well, all top players employ agents before signing anything. (The VAT tribunal eventually refused rebates as the agents were contracted exclusively to the players, making the club's use of them "wholly unreasonable and, therefore, incapable of being a legal usage".)

So how could the charade have carried on for so long? The FA refused to comment, but it must either have filed the papers without looking at them or turned a blind eye for years – neither of which inspires much confidence in the board that now vows to clean up the game.

EYE CROSSWORD 323

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 6 October 2006

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

5 Fruity luvvie caught with Grant ... (6)

8... bum to bum, dead tight (3-5)

10 Son, being a sailor means shagging (8)

11 Bristol chip snack (6)

12 Flash character gets to give a roasting to champing-at-the-bit politician (6,5)

15 Grope and come together in an excited state (5,2)

16 Lavatory crap – needs a musical setting (7)

19 PM Harold (star comedian) linked with Brown, the never-to-be Labour leader (5,6)

22 One member gobbled by broadcaster is inadequate (6)

24 Arse operation without normal unblocking initially – keep it firmly shut! (6,2)

25 The Palace: Brenda's last joint supporter left inside (8)

26 'Kinky Lips' has two females on grass (6)

DOWN

1 Over-sensitive to crappy garlic – the French included (8)

2 To capture Blair's heart, Gordon playing the old soldier (7)

3 Place for fairies? Got out, but without balls (6)

4 Leg over, writhing, I get in jelly (9)

6 Ex-con Brenda abandoned – shrewd! (4)

7 Flog musical composition collection (4-5)

9 Times includes a load of crap (3)

13 Den collared by champs (no lovers of 12) (9)

14 Kill Tony off about mid-Dec and go stuff yourself (3,6)

17 They might well reveal Blair's behind in unusual hot spell (3,5)

18 Out of Ben and Lisa, the one who's not straight? (7)

20 "Balls to politician!" a hard band member's outburst (6)

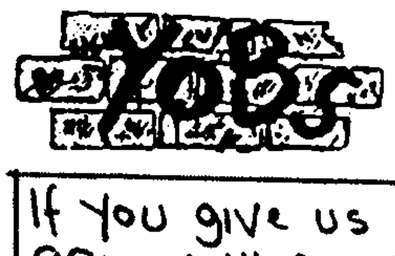
21 Arse has fellow's documents (4)

23 Loafer stuck up male (3)

Crossword 322 winner: DAVE STEVENS

ACROSS: 9 Bloodbath 11 Offbeat 12 Maxwell 13 Erato 15 Out of step 17/26 Arse-kicking contest 21 Blaspheme 23 Karma 24 Rodgers 28 Elvis 29 Chief Whip.

DOWN: 1 Abdomen 2 Goof 3 Idle gossip 4 Castro 5 Thematic 6 Apex 7 Paper tiger 8 Cyclops 14 Adam and Eve 16 Flick-knife 18 Knee sock 19 Aborted 20 Laptops 22 Euclid 25/10 Easy-peasy 27 Echo



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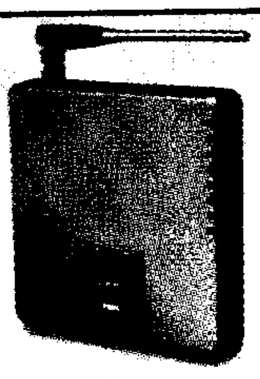

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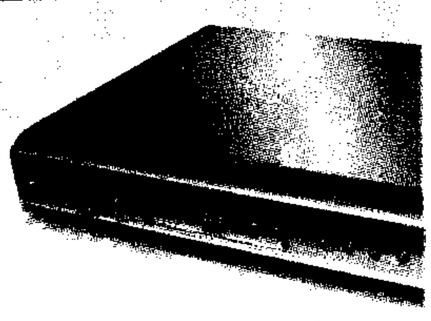

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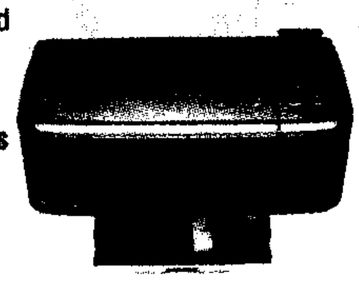

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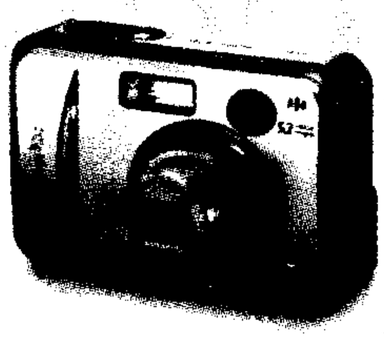
FUJI A350 5 MEGAPIXEL CAMERA



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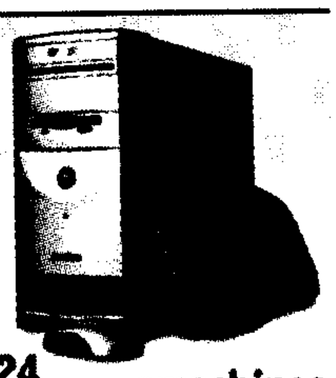

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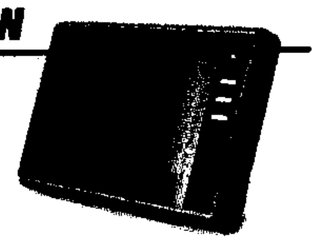

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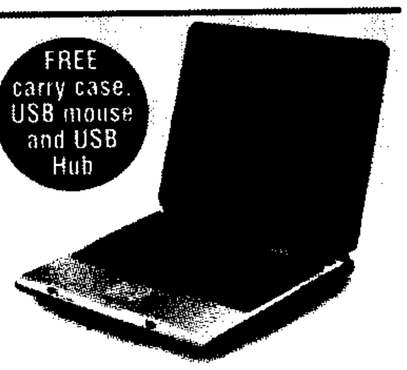

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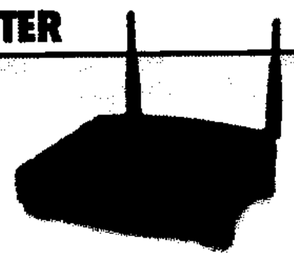

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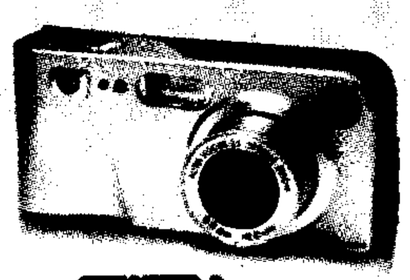

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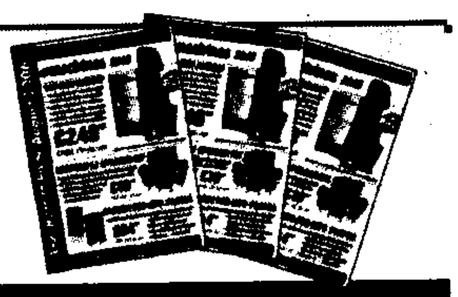

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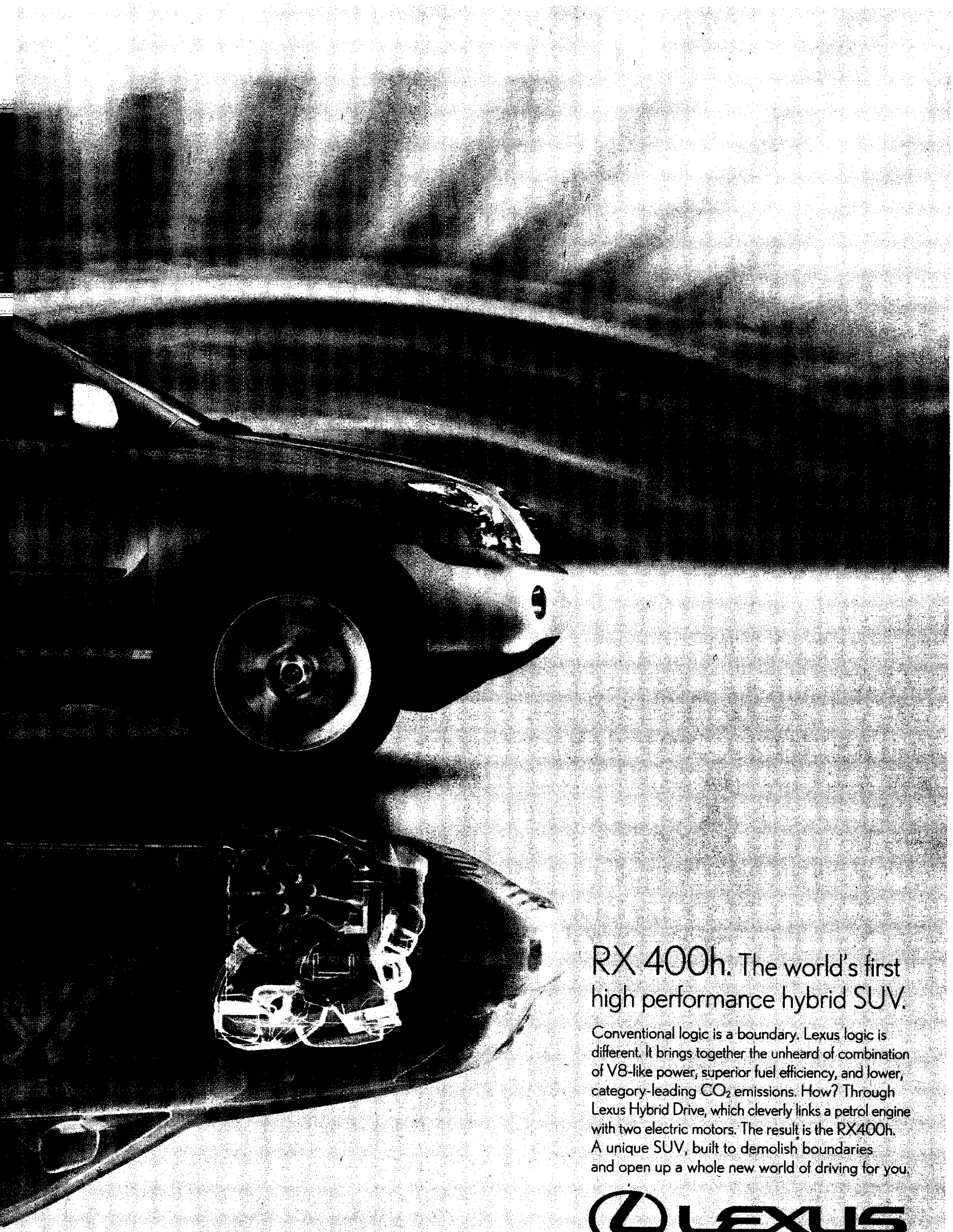

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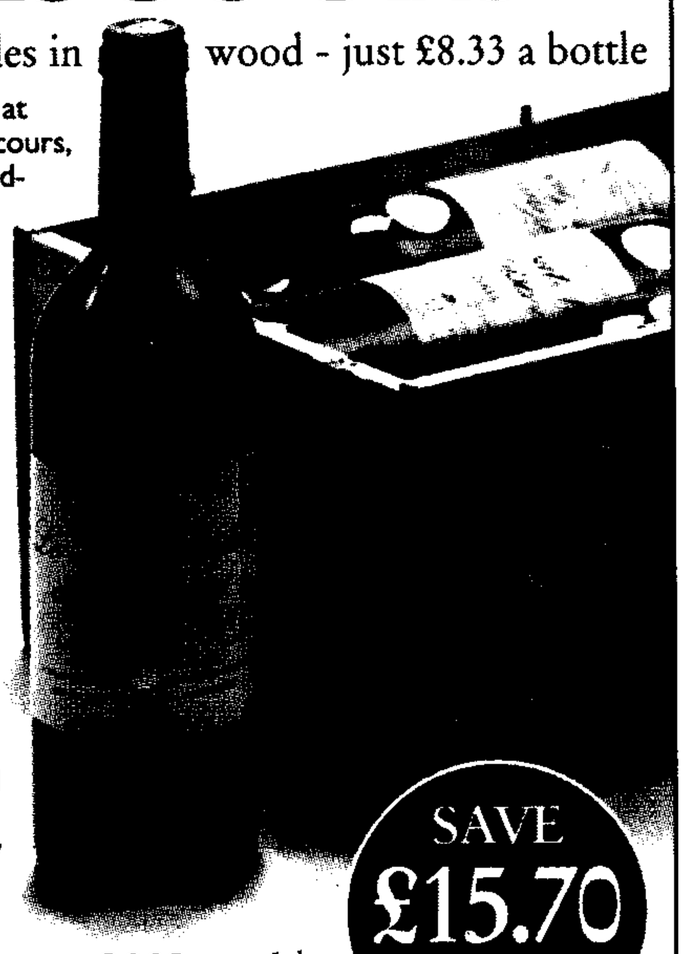

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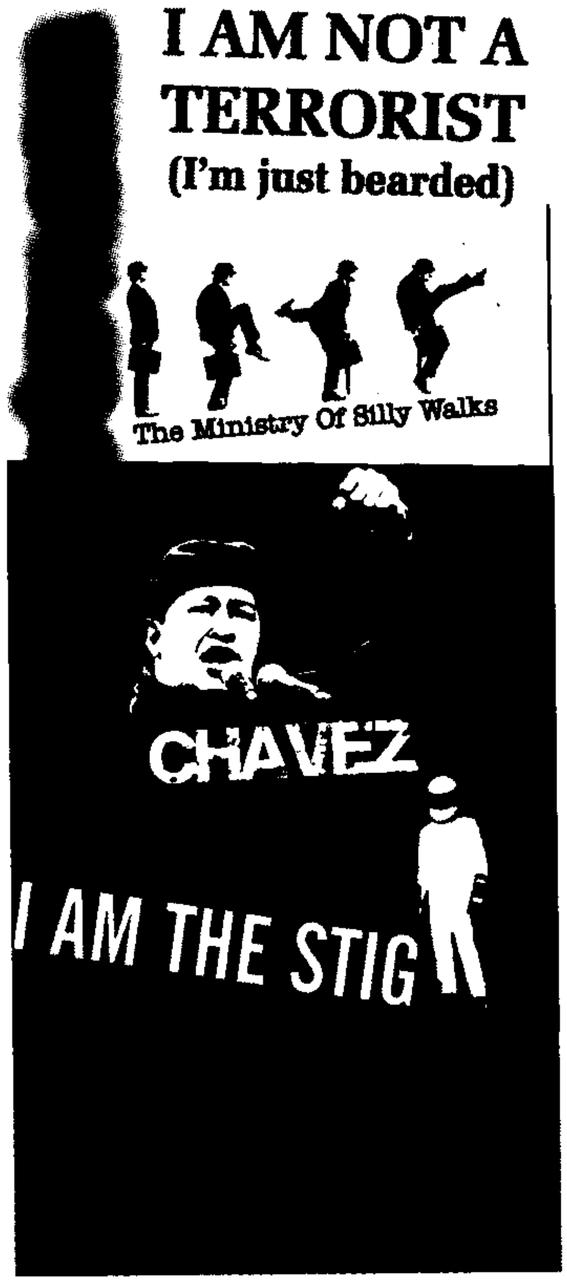

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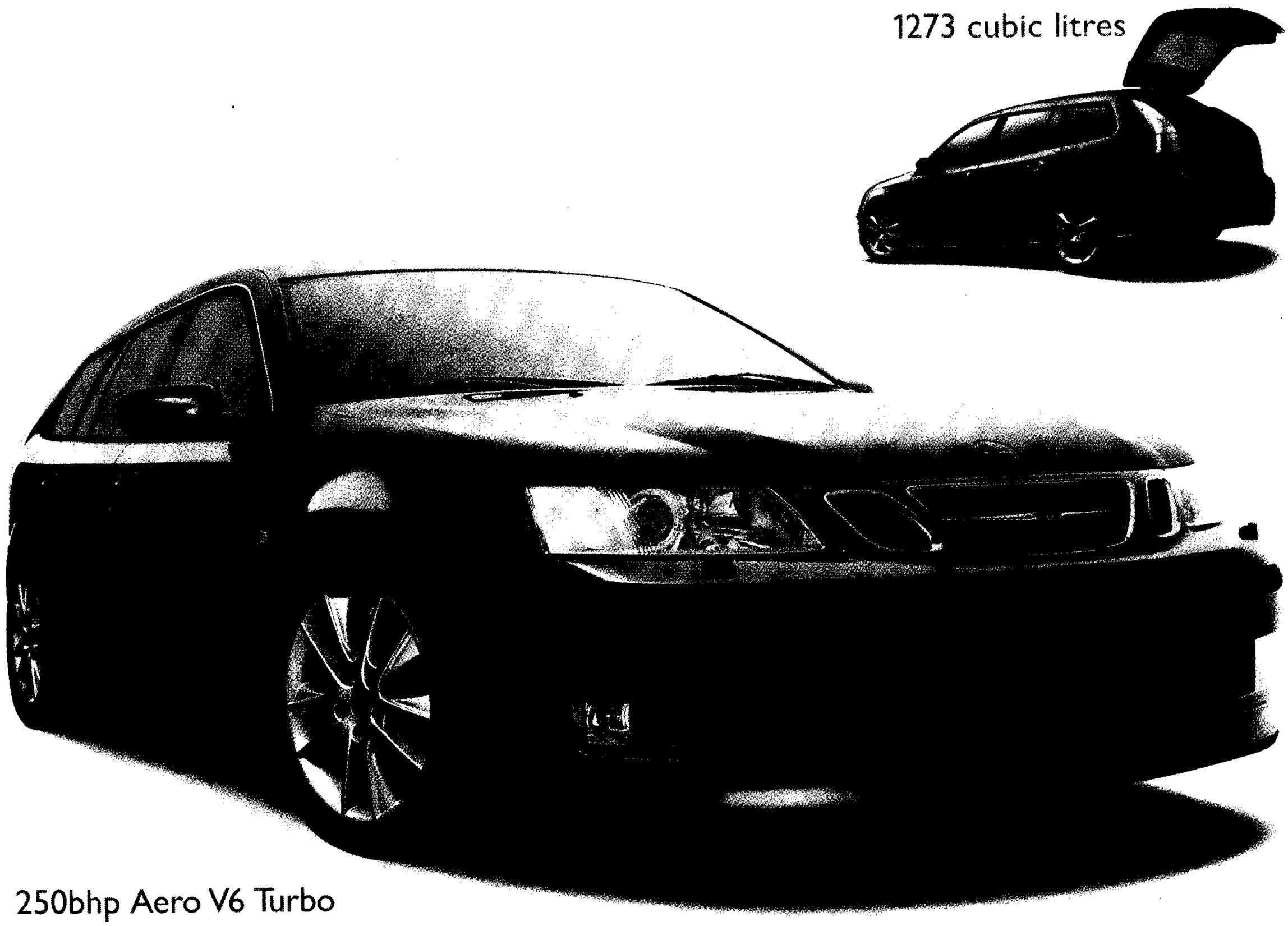

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OFFICIAL FUEL CONSUMPTION FIGURES FOR SAAB 9-3 SPORTWAGON RANGE IN MPG (LITRES/100KM): URBAN 16.4 (17.2) - 39.2 (7.3), EXTRA URBAN 38.2 (7.4) - 62.8 (4.5), COMBINED 25.7 (11.0) - 51.4 (5.5), CO_2 EMISSIONS 149 - 264 G/KM. Model illustrated Saab 9-3 Aero V6 SportWagon with optional alloy wheels (ALU65) - on-the-road price £29,515. All prices correct at time of going to press.

†Charge for text will be at users' normal network rate.